J. M. Hopkins

from
Rev. Father Whelahan
England - now dead

1905

MEDITATIONS

AND

DISCOURSES.

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AND

DISCOURSES

ON THE

SUBLIME TRUTHS AND IMPORTANT DUTIES

OF

CHRISTIANITY:

BEING A POSTHUMOUS WORK OF

THE REV. ALBAN BUTLER,

AUTHOR OF "THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS," "FEASTS AND FASTS OF THE CHURCH," ETC. ETC.

NEW EDITION, COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

REVISED AND IMPROVED BY

THE REV. JOHN LANIGAN, D.D.

DUBLIN:

PUBLISHED BY JAMES DUFFY, 25, ANGLESEA STREET.

SOLD BY THE CATHOLIC BOOK SOCIETY, 5, ESSEX BRIDGE; R. GRACE, CAPEL STREET; D. MULCAHY, CORK; P. AND J. O'GORMAN, LIMERICK; R. GREER, NEWRY; AND T. JONES, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1840.

FROM THE STEAM PRESS OF ALEXANDER THOM, 86, ABBEY STREET, DUBLIN.

PREFACE TO THIS EDITION.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the peculiar merits of the works of the truly learned and pious Alban Butler. They form in themselves their best eulogium. Clear, solid, and powerful—not in loftiness of speech—nor in the fanciful language of the human understanding; but, in the spirit and wisdom of God, they explain the doctrines, and maintain the morality of the Church, in terms fitted to the lowest, as well as to the highest capacity. His "Lives of the Saints" have been justly styled "An Encyclopædia of religious knowledge." His work on "The Feasts, Fasts, and other Annual Observances of the Catholic Church" (recently printed by the publisher in a manner, it is hoped, worthy of such a treasure), is a complete introduction to the "Lives of the Saints," and a masterpiece of learning and piety. The "Meditations and Discourses," here presented to the public, have ever obtained the highest commendations of all Catholic bishops and pastors. Finding that the work has become very scarce, and most expensive, and that a new edition has been long wished for, the publisher has deemed it desirable to present the whole, in one handsome volume, elegantly printed on good paper, and at a very moderate price.

Considerable pains have been taken to preserve the accuracy of the highly gifted Author; and, at the same time, to avoid those errors of the press—always attending numerous editions.

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As the original edition, in three volumes, presented the Discourses in an irregular and disjointed order—and as sufficient care had not been paid to that accuracy of style, and correctness of punctuation, which are essential to perspicuity—particularly in discussing theological and moral subjects—the labors and criticisms of the late learned and Reverend Dr. LANIGAN, in this respect, have been attended to—due order has been followed, and past defects carefully amended. It is confidently expected, that this work will be most extensively circulated, and that no public or private library will be without it.

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MEDITATIONS.

MEDITATION I.

SALVATION OUR ONLY AFFAIR.

Our salvation is the only end for which Almighty God created us, and placed us in this world. It was his only end in redeeming us. It is the only thing he has given us in charge, and this by the most severe command.

1. "One thing is necessary," says our dearest Saviour, viz., that we love and serve God, and save our souls. This was the sole and whole design of the most holy Trinity in *creating me* and all mankind. Nor could he produce anything but for himself, as it is the indefeasible right of the Creator, that every creature always depend on, and ever be referred to him, its essential last end and centre. He stood in no need of any creature, being infinitely happy in himself, and incapable of receiving any addition or accession. "Thou art my God, because thou standest not in need of my goods." It was out of his mere boundless goodness that he was pleased to create men, that he might communicate himself to them, and make them happy in himself. Thus he made them for himself. "The Lord wrought all things for himself." I lay buried in the abyss of nothing. If God stretched out his merciful arm and drew me thence—if he gave me this noble being capable of knowing and praising him—if he bestowed on me this body with all its wonderful organs and senses, this immortal soul endowed with reason and all its faculties, it was only, that I might know and love him, and be made partaker of his happiness and goodness. He framed the sun, moon, and other planets; the vast firmament spangled with so many bright stars, and the heavens with all the bodies they contain; and established the laws of their uninterrupted revolutions and various movements, for me. He created for me this earth with all its elements, metals, fruits, trees, and plants; and with all the innumerable variety of living creatures that fill the air, the earth, and the waters: all for this same only end, that I might thank, praise, and obey him. It was no part of his adorable design in making and placing me here, that I should occupy myself in pleasures, riches, honours, or any other thing whatsoever, which should not totally and purely belong and be referred to this his only end. Every moment, therefore, I ever spent in such empty pursuits, I ran counter to the holy designs of the blessed Trinity in my regard, and to the sole end for which I received my being in this world. With what regret, my God, do I reflect on my past unthinking folly and base perfidiousness! No more, by thy assistance, will I ever be so senseless. I will never undertake or perform any action, even

in my temporal affairs; but in the view of doing your most holy will. To this alone I will labour with all my strength—I will refer all my moments, I will consecrate my thoughts, affections, words, and actions. For this I will never cease most earnestly to implore your divine grace. Teach me and strengthen me to seek and follow only your holy will in all things, and never more to swerve from my end fixed by yourself. "Make my end known to me." *Notum fac mihi, Domine, finem meum*, (Ps. xxxviii.) shall be my continual prayer.

In this same only view has God preserved and still preserves me, thus every moment bestowing afresh my whole being upon me, rescuing and protecting me from from innumerable accidents, misfortunes, and dangers, furnishing me with all the conveniencies, necessaries, and comforts of life, which I enjoy. How could I be so blind and insensible as hitherto so strangely to misapply his gifts, and abuse his bounty to my own inexpressible misfortune! I will, to the utmost of my power, for the future, retrieve and make all possible amends for past losses, by giving every action and moment to my last end with redoubled fervour.

2. God points out this my only end, still more remarkably, in all the great mysteries he has wrought for me, *in the order of grace:* in these he displays his infinite wisdom and power in the most astonishing manner. When I was lost in sin, and groaned under the slavery of the devil and the sentence of eternal damnation, the blessed Trinity decreed my redemption, and the eternal God the Son descended from Heaven, clothed himself with human nature, led a painful laborious life on earth, and died a most cruel and ignominious death, to pay my ransom and re-instate me in grace, only that I might love and serve him. All the mysteries of his whole life, his birth, his hidden life, his miracles, preaching, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension; his establishing his Church; his sacraments and inspirations; the exhortations of his ministers; all the graces, all the means of salvation I have ever received, had only this one end in view, that I should save my soul. If ever I deviate from it, I frustrate, in my regard, all his designs, all his sufferings and labours, and all his graces which cost him so dear. My soul, thy salvation is a good, for which God has not spared his only Son: a good which this only Son has purchased at the price of his own blood, of his life, of himself. See how much thou hast cost a God, and hence frame an idea of the importance of this affair of thy salvation. Can any Christian be so senseless as to give up his right to God's inheritance for a base pleasure, for a vile interest?

3. God in creating me has commanded me to serve him and save my soul, and that I make this my only affair. "It is written: Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and serve him alone." Matt. iv. 10. "No man can serve two masters." Matt. vi. 20. And the oracle of the Holy Ghost declares: "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for in this does every man, and the whole man consist," Eccles. xii. 13; *i. e.* all else in man is nothing. All honours, riches, shining qualities, great actions, conquests of empires: all wit, policy, knowledge, and sciences are nothing; nothing in themselves, and in reality; mere folly before God and in truth. It is only as far as his service may be found in them, that they are to be considered. The humble labour of the poorest artisan, referred to God, is incomparably great; whereas *they* are emptiness, and generally sin. "Though a man should be accomplished and quite finished among the

sons of men, if thy wisdom be not with him, he will be reckoned for nothing, O God." Sap. ix. 6. Though he should be the most accomplished in all natural parts, and in all acquired qualifications of mind and body; the most learned philosopher, and an oracle in all sciences; the most renowned conqueror, who fills the universe with the noise of his name; all this, the Holy Ghost says, is contemptible, is nothing. The valour of an Alexander and a Cæsar—the eloquence of a Cicero—the learning of an Aristotle or a Plato, is nothing. The poverty of a Lazarus, abandoned by all the world, is far more desirable than all the greatness, all the riches, and all the delights of the earth: a glass of cold water given to a poor man is preferable to the acquisition of a crown; and one simple act of the meanest virtue is preferable to the most famous exploits of those divinities of the earth, who have filled the world with the sound of their applause. Splendid as these are in the eyes of mortals, God esteems, more than them all, one single thought of the most simple labourer employed for eternity. Did men weigh well this truth, they would envy the solitude of the poorest artisan above the highest throne on earth, and deem whatever all the world esteems (as it truly is) folly and madness.

My soul, examine thy own heart. Has the service of God been hitherto thy only end? Make it such for the future. Hast thou looked upon this as thy only affair? Esteem it so from henceforward. Have this deeply engraven on thy mind: let all other projects succeed or not succeed, it matters not. "Whatever is not God is nothing, and ought to be accounted for nothing." Imit. Chr. b. 3, c. 31. All my actions and my whole life ought to be directed to this end.

To serve him, and save my soul, shall be my only and continued study, my only affair. It was the only end in the designs of God the Father in creating me. Behold the first lesson I learned in my catechism. It was the only end in the designs of God the Son in redeeming me; the only end of his mysteries, labours, and death. It was "for us men and for our salvation," says the Nicene creed. It is the only end of the Holy Ghost in sanctifying me; and in all the graces he has bestowed and is ready to bestow upon me. And shall not this be my only study and aim in all things? I belong to God in *justice*, as I am all his: I belong to him in *gratitude*, as I subsist entirely by his benefits: I belong all to him, as he is *my last end:* I belong to him *for my own interest*, and as he is my happiness; I am made for him, and he alone is capable of filling my heart. I will then live and die to him alone, and to his service.

MEDITATION II.

SALVATION OUR ONLY AFFAIR OF IMPORTANCE.

We judge of the importance of an affair by its excellence, and by the consequence it is of; by the difficulty of retrieving it in case of a miscarriage; by the dangers and difficulties which attend it. These considerations alone suffice to show, that salvation is man's only affair of importance.

1. The more noble, the more excellent a thing is, the greater is its importance. To obtain a rich empire, or any place of great honour, what pains do not worldlings take? because they think it an affair of the utmost importance, especially if a miscarriage in it should threaten them with utter ruin. A lawsuit on which a great estate, and their all depends, what application, what study, what anxiety does it not bring? how does it engross all a man's thoughts and fill his mind, so that he is not able to give any attention to any other thing whatsoever? The importance of this draws him totally to itself, and drowns all thoughts about other things. If I have seen a man engaged in such a suit, or standing a dangerous trial for his life, I understood what it was for one to have an affair of weight on his mind. Such, and greater ought to be my attention to the affair of my salvation. It ought wholly to possess my soul, and fill my mind and heart, so as to swallow up and drown all temporal concerns whatsoever. This will make me sovereignly happy or sovereignly miserable, and that for eternity. No other affair can make me altogether happy or miserable; all other losses leave some comfort or enjoyment; but this none at all; this includes all losses possible. O consider seriously, my soul, what it is to be saved or damned; to live for ever with the saints or suffer for ever with the devils, to reign in heaven or suffer in hell. Weigh well these great truths, and you will see that this affair is infinitely greater than all the worldly business of kings and emperors, and of all men put together; that is our only affair; that, providing this be safe, all is well: all sufferings, all other losses possible are not to be in the least regarded. But if this miscarry, all is lost. The infinite importance of this affair quite swallows up all other concerns. "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. "If this be lost, everything is lost," says St. Eucherius. "*Ubi salutis damnum, ibi nullum lucrum.*" Euch. ep. ad Valer. Yet men little think on this. "God looked down from heaven," says the royal prophet, "to see if there is a man of understanding and seeking God on earth." "All have gone astray; are altogether become unprofitable; there is not one who does good." Ps. xiii. and lii. Could a man, from some point in the heavens, behold the whole world at once, and what all men are employed in; and did God discover to him all that passes now in their souls, he would, doubtless, see a wonderful multitude and variety of thoughts and desires; but all tending to the perishable goods of this life, scarcely any looking farther, and referring them to eternity. He would see some eagerly pursuing honours and empire, others riches; others, taken up with pastimes and pleasures: many employed in building, trading, tilling the ground, &c. All transported with passion, anger, hatred, jealousy, love, or the like, and filled with an infinity of opposite thoughts and desires, but scarcely any one thinking seriously on eternity. All like little children busied earnestly about baubles, but insensible to the greatest losses or concerns: infinitely to be deplored, as *their* employments lead to torments, whereas children's play-things are toys of their age. Want of knowledge excuses a child, if he rejoice to have a suit of mourning at the death of a parent, insensible of his loss; but men are inexcusable, in being so insensible in regard to eternity. The Holy Ghost cries out to them: "*Usquequo parvuli diligitis infantiam?*" "How long, O children, do you delight in toys?" Hear, kings and

lords, doctors, prelates, generals, soldiers, merchants, and labourers—and all ye, who, busied with the cares of this life, neglect eternity—you are all deemed fools by the judgment of eternal wisdom, and your folly is the most extreme madness. My soul, beware of such blindness. Make thy salvation thy only concern in all thy undertakings. The Romans engraved in brass this as the supreme law of their republic, to take place of all other laws: "*Salus populi suprema lex esto.*"—"Let the safety of the people be the sovereign law." Engrave on thy heart and on all thy actions this as thy supreme rule, to be always and solely attended to: "The salvation of thy soul is thy sovereign law." For other affairs regard only particular times or circumstances; this is the great affair of all times, actions, and places, at home and abroad, in town and in country, in solitude and in company, in church, at court, or the market.

Our salvation is of so much greater importance, because a miscarriage in it is for ever, and utterly irretrievable. Temporal losses usually may, at least in some measure, be repaired, or some amends, some comfort, still remain. If we lose a house, we build another; if a friend, we may find a second. If we lose an eye or a hand, we have one still; at least we have always some comforts or helps to supply the loss. But we have but one soul, and if this be once lost, the loss is absolute, and eternally irretrievable; for out of hell there is no redemption. If in case of disappointment we could be admitted to a second chance, the case would not be absolutely so dreadful. But a soul once lost is for ever lost. Can I then risk this my only one, this my great all, my spiritual and immortal soul, created to the likeness of God and stamped with his image! She was made only to know, love, and enjoy God, and to be his eternal spouse.

Ah, my soul! secure thy main chance, in which a loss is absolutely irrecoverable and entire. Contemn all other affairs whatsoever; only be solicitous never to expose this to the least hazard. No care, no security, can be too great, where an eternity is depending. Bear always in mind the important advice of thy Redeemer, the true lover of souls: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice." Matt. vi. 33. And the comment of St. Bernard: "Never admit the least thought prejudicial to thy salvation. I say too little; I mean the least thought, which does not concern or some way tend to thy salvation. If any occur, it is to be rejected." De Cons. l. 3, c. 3.

3. What, above other considerations, ought to excite my solicitude and watchfulness, is the difficulty and uncertainty of this most important affair, and my all. There is no absolute security on earth: the way is straight, the judge rigorous, the examination most strict and severe on every action, intention, and thought. I am weakness itself; my understanding is clouded; my will perverted by sin; my passions strong and many; enemies without and within, numerous, subtle, and implacable. Amidst these, my soul is surrounded with so many dangers, that my salvation must imply a chain of many continued miracles. Imagine a small boat, half rotten, leaking on every side, floating on a vast sea full of rocks and shelves, beaten by a furious storm, in the midst of a dark night, and pursued by cruel pirates, what a miracle, or rather chain of miracles, would be necessary for that poor vessel to arrive safe in the harbour? The state of a soul in this world is still more dangerous, meeting everywhere dangers, everywhere stumbling blocks. Nor can she ever have any security; for, as the wise man says: "Who of men can know his own way?" Prov. xx. 24.

We see an Apostle, though confirmed in grace, chastising his body lest he should become a reprobate; a St. John the Baptist, though sanctified in his mother's womb, pass twenty-five years in a frightful solitude, and in the most severe penitential life; a St. Augustin, after his conversion, refusing to teach rhetoric or profane learning, lest he should forget his salvation; others burnt, racked, or hewn in pieces; legions of saints retiring into lonesome deserts, others walling themselves up in cloisters, all labouring with continual application to secure their salvation; and can I be so slothful and negligent in this my great, my only concern, and yet live secure, as if salvation cost little, and was the least, the safest of affairs!

If I will, it is certainly in my power to save my soul, and secure my eternity, through the assistance of divine grace. God wills not the death of any sinner; "he desires all men to be saved." 2 Tim. ii. 4. He created me only to serve him, and to save myself. He sent his only Son, equal, and co-eternal with himself, to redeem me. After giving me *Him*, has not he given all other things with him? He furnishes me abundantly with all the means of salvation, and assures me of all his most powerful succours, infinitely more earnestly desiring my happiness, than I can do myself. I will then strive and contend with the greatest ardour I am capable of to ascertain this main and only affair.

MEDITATION III.

ON FERVOUR IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

THE first great obstacle, by which the devil ruins the salvation of innumerable Christian souls, is lukewarmness and tepidity. For fervour is necessary to begin to serve God truly. It is necessary to persevere in serving him. It behoves me to know in what this Christian fervour consists.

1. The first step to virtue is vehemently to desire it. To desire so great a good only by halves is to undervalue it, and the sure disposition never to obtain it. Our Saviour compares the kingdom of God to a "treasure hidden in a field, which a man having fond, selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field;" and again, to a pearl of great price, "which when one had found, he went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it." Matt. xiii. 44, 45, 46. This great treasure, this precious pearl, is the kingdom of God reigning in our souls by his grace. This is a good above all price; God is mercifully pleased to bestow it upon us, but on condition we give for it our whole selves. If we do not offer him our souls and all our affections, without any reserve or division, we cannot purchase it. It is a false maxim of the world that the kingdom of God costs little. It must cost all we have: it requires an entire sacrifice of all, at least in spirit. Religious persons, who consecrate themselves to God in cloisters, renounce the world and all its affairs, distractions, vanities, and pleasures; the dominion of themselves and their own wills. This is not of precept to all: this they do only as a means to be able to make the interior sacrifice of all in their hearts more freely and more perfectly. But this inward sacrifice of all things in spirit is indispensably necessary, and of precept as to all, whe-

ther religious, or Christians living in the world. It is only on this condition, only by this means I can purchase the kingdom of God by his grace in my soul during this life, and that of his glory in the world to come.

My heart cannot contain together God and the world: it is too narrow for both. God is too great to allow any rival, or to find a place in a divided heart. His first and great law is: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole mind." Matt. xxii. 37. He has made me all for himself, and cannot, without the greatest injury, indignity, and injustice to himself, admit any partner or competitor in my affections. "No man can serve two masters," Matt. v.; especially such as are directly contrary to one another, as God and the world essentially are. We must, then, seek this inestimable treasure of grace with the most earnest desire we are capable of—with a desire that has some proportion to so great a blessing—with a desire ready to renounce and sacrifice everything else for it—with a desire that despises and tramples upon all things which tend not to this. With the Apostle: "we must count all things to be but loss. I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ." Phil. iii. 8. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, (*i. e.* that seek it with a vehement desire,) for they shall have their fill," says our blessed Saviour, Matt. v. 6. And the wise man says: "The beginning of wisdom is the most true desire of discipline." Sap. vi. 18. And he attributes to this all the spiritual wisdom of grace and virtue which God bestowed upon him. "I desired, and wisdom was given me; and I begged it, and the spirit of wisdom came unto me. And I preferred it to kingdoms and thrones; and I counted riches to be nothing in comparison of it. Nor did I compare the precious stones to it; because all gold is but a little sand, and silver will be esteemed as dirt if compared to it. I loved it above life and beauty, and desired to have it as my light; for its light is perpetual. All good things came unto me together with it, and unspeakable glory through its hands. Its treasure is infinite to men: they who have used it have been made sharers of the friendship of God." Sap. vii. 7, &c. He again declares: "Wisdom is easily seen by those who love it, and is found by those who seek it. It directs those who desire her, to show herself first to them. He that watches to her from the early morning shall not labour in his search; for he shall find her at his door. He who shall watch for her shall be soon secure; because she goes about seeking those who are worthy of her, and she cheerfully shows herself to them in the highways, and meets them in everything." Sap. vi. 13, &c. "I loved and sought her from my youth, and sought to take her a spouse to myself, and I was her lover. I purposed to draw her to me to rest with me, knowing that she will communicate of her good things with me." Sap. viii. The devout Henry Suso, hearing these last words read at table in a Dominican convent, was so powerfully affected by them, that, in public, he burst out into these exclamations: "Oh! I will try to procure this happy wisdom. If I can obtain it, I am certainly the happiest of men. I will desire, I will seek, I will ask nothing else. It invites me; it is in my power to obtain it. Adieu all other thoughts and employs. I will pray and conjure it without ceasing, and with all the ardour of my soul, to visit me. I will sigh and seek it night and day." Thus he did, and thus he became an eminent servant of God. Suerius vit. de Suson.

My soul, the eternal wisdom invites thee, crying aloud on the mountains and highways, in the streets, at the entries of towns, at the doors of houses, everywhere calling men to him, saying: "O men, to you I cry out; my voice is directed to the sons of men. O, little ones, learn prudence; and O fools, understand. Listen, for I am going to speak of great things. Wisdom is better than all most precious things, and no other desirable good can be compared to it. I love those who love me: and they who watch to me in the morning shall find me. With me are riches and glory, great treasure and justice. My fruit is better than gold and jewels. I will walk in the paths of justice, seeking to enrich those who love me, and to fill their stores," &c. Prov. viii. Call in this great good to thyself, and prepare thy heart for it with all possible application and care. Bless God, who has created thee for such an infinite blessing, and exert all thy ardour and strength, that sloth and cowardice deprive thee not of it. "It is only the hungry God has filled with good things," Luke i. 53; *i. e.* those who vehemently desire and most ardently seek them.

Fervour is equally necessary for us to our perseverance and progress in the service of God. This is the greatest mark of the Holy Ghost's reigning in a soul, if she earnestly strive to advance in perfection. It is a sign that a man has already found the mine, when he is earnest to dig farther and farther. "No one is virtuous," says St. Bernard, ep. 254, ad Garin, "who does not perpetually strive and desire to be more virtuous. He gives a proof of greater perfection, by how much the more earnestly he labours to attain higher." And as the same Saint says, Serm. 2. de 1 Andr.: "There is no more certain testimony of the presence of the Holy Ghost than a great desire of higher grace."

Out of this motive St. Paul always laboured in fear, if by any means he could obtain his crown. "*Si quomodo comprehendam.*" Phil. iii. 13. This is the strict command of God: "Be faithful unto death." Apoc. xi. 10. Fear not advancing in justice until death. "Let him, who is just, be justified yet: and he who is holy be sanctified yet more." This is the law of our engagements to God. This is also the proper effect of grace, which is sure to abandon those who do not improve it. Hence St. Augustin says, "If thou standest still thou art a lost man. "*Si stetisti periisti.*" Serm. 15. verb. ap. And again: "God hates him who would stand still, and who falls back." L. de Cant. novo, c. 1. Not to go on is to go back. "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking behind him, is fit for the kingdom of God," says Christ, Luke xix. 11. Whence St. Bernard cries out: "O monk, will thou not go forward? then thou wouldst go back, or thou wouldst stand, which cannot be; for nothing can stand in the same state in this world." Ep. 353. And St. Gregory the Great: "It is not possible to stand in one place: he falls to the lowest who strives not continually to the highest." Pastor. p. 3, admon. 53. For, on one side, grace forsakes him; on the other, his passions draw him headlong. For we are like to a man, says Cassian, who is rowing against a rapid stream; the moment he ceases to row, he is driven back by the strength of the current. So are we by the torrent of our passions, if we in the least let fall our hands.

2. St. Basil thus defines a fervent soul: "He is fervent in spirit whoever does the will of God with an ardent desire, an insatiable eagerness, and an unwearied attention and diligence." Resp. brev. 259. He is one, who, burning with the holy fire of divine love, does not go, but flies to all

that regards the service of God, and this with an ardour, zeal, and fidelity which never slackens; one who, penetrated in the bottom of his soul with the most profound sentiments which a creature can conceive for its God, is always occupied in adoring, praising, and blessing him, and finds no other pleasure on earth than in all things to do his will, and give himself anew to him, and who is desirous of crosses and suffering for his sake. Fervour consists not so much in what is done, as in doing everything with the greatest sentiments for God, *with a great heart and willing cheerful soul.* Farthings, offered to God with a heart full of affection, are more agreeable to him than the richest presents made with a tepid heart. Fervour then implies, 1st, A sincere intention and an earnest desire to please God. 2ndly, An entire application, with all possible attention to every duty. 3rdly, An extreme gratitude in all duties. 4thly, Courage and joy under all difficulties, breaking through all obstacles. 5thly, To enter into the spirit and perfect sentiments of every virtue. 6thly, To seize all occasions and opportunities of virtue. 7thly, Constancy and perseverance to the end. What eagerness in those who are near kings? With what zeal do the angels fly to do God's will? With what swiftness do the stars move to perform it? With what exactness does nature observe his laws? An image of the swiftness and exactness with which we ought to run in all the ways of the Lord.

My soul, convert thyself to God with fervour. "If thou beginnest, begin perfectly," as St. Bernard says. It would be a deceitful stratagem of the devil to undertake too much at first. A child cannot bear what a man could. Begin with prudence and advice, but with great ardour and fervency of soul, and with great dispositions. Be careful always to preserve and increase this fervour of thy conversation, continually to awaken and stir it up afresh. Remind thyself often of thy end and obligations, imitating St. Bernard, who often said to himself for this purpose: "Bernard, Bernard, why camest thou hither?" or St. Arsenius, who always repeated: "Arsenius, why didst thou forsake the world and come into this desert?" 2ndly, Say often to thyself, that thou wilt now begin to do penance and serve God: "I have said, it is now I begin in earnest." Ps. lxxvi. 7. For, in the paths of virtue, "when a man shall have finished, it is then he still begins." Eccl. xvii. 6. 3rdly, Sometimes say: "A great way still remains for thee." 3 Kings xix. 7. An eternity is to be provided for: the time for this is very short and uncertain. 4thly, With St. Paul, forget the past, wholly occupied with the thoughts of what is before thee, and how to employ all that well. "I do not think I have yet attained anything," says the Apostle, Phil. iii. 13; "but one thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before." Thus look only forwards, my soul. But, 5thly, remember thou art to redouble thy pace, because thou hast already lost much time, and the end of thy course draws near; and "so much the more, as you shall see the day of the Lord approach nigher you." Heb. x. 35. I must trade till he comes with my wages in his hands. "*Negotiamini dum venio.*" Luke xix. 13.

MEDITATION IV.

ON TEPIDITY IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

What is this tepidity? It generally is a state of hidden mortal sin. It exposes to a certain and most dangerous fall.

1. The just fall into venial sins by surprise, and into small infidelities of frailty; but they soon discover and detest them, and speedily, by penance for them, recover whatever prejudice or diminution their fervour and charity may have suffered. But those are called lukewarm who wilfully fall into venial sins, and habitually contemn them, or at least who are afraid of embracing perfect virtue. They frequent the sacraments; they pray, but all with indifference. They indeed are afraid of mortal sin, and would not knowingly consent to one for the world, and propose by their lives to save their souls, and to avoid the broad way; but then they are afraid also of being bigots, or of going too far in piety, they dare not open their hearts entirely to it, and fear it should get full possession of their souls. Their common language is, that ordinary virtue is enough for them; they are content, if they can be saved with the lowest degree, or even through purgatory, and do not aim at the merits of the saints, or to walk in the sublime paths of perfection, as they call them. Under these pretexts, they are afraid to go beyond obligation, and examine always how far it may be stretched. Thus they bargain, as it were, with God in every duty, how far they are obliged to go under the guilt of mortal sin. Now, this disposition is extremely displeasing to Almighty God. Did he, in redeeming them, and in the innumerable mercies which he so bountifully showers down upon them, follow such a rule, or go no farther than he was obliged? How must he resent such a base and ungrateful return? Gerson illustrates the case by this comparison: If a nobleman amongst many sons had one, who would obstinately sit always idle at home, caring for nothing, provided he could live in a sordid manner, saying "he was content to lead any kind of mean life," and so would never undertake or learn anything suitable to his birth or capacity, though continually admonished and pressed to it by his father, is it not evident that such a disobedient slothful son could expect no favours from his father? Myst. Theol. consid. t. 3. c. 405. Another common comparison is that of a servant, who, though unwilling to transgress his master's orders in matters of weight, should be ever disputing how far his duty carried him in them, and should make it even his diversion to violate his commands in smaller things on every occasion. Certainly such a behaviour would be more insupportable than that of a servant who should sometimes offend in points of moment. Thus, the lukewarm Christian is often more odious to God than the open sinner. Hear what our Saviour said to the lukewarm bishop of Laodicea, Apoc. iii. 15, 16: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." Had he been quite cold in the service of God, Christ would not have so much abhorred him. As he was lukewarm, our merciful Lord expresses how hateful that state was to him, by saying his stomach even loathed him, and that he must vomit him up, and cast him off.

2. Lukewarmness in any considerable degree must generally be accompanied with many hidden mortal sins. The soul flatters herself she is in a state of grace, but alas! before God she has already lost that happiness, and yet her misery is hidden from her eyes. First, perhaps, she has been in an habitual disposition of never labouring to avoid any venial sin. This is in itself always a mortal sin, because it implies a grievous contempt of God, and is an immediate occasion of mortal sin. Secondly, the tepid soul is ever studying to enlarge the narrow way as much as may be, and often ventures so far as the boundaries of mortal sin, boundaries which are often uncertain, and in which self-love easily blinds and deceives the negligent Christian. Thus, whilst he allows himself several liberties and freedoms in his actions, in his words, in his thoughts, he often offends mortally by detractions, rash judgments, &c., in what he persuades himself is no more than venial. He also often deceives himself in the interpretation of the law, and, blinded by passion, judges of it in a false light, straining all the precepts of the Church, and even of the law of nature, to his own desires; for example, magnifying every slight indisposition into a pretence for a dispensation from fasting; or taking too large allowances for collation, calling indecent freedoms innocent diversion, and the like, daily indulging in the passions of jealousy, hatred, revenge, sensuality, &c., in which many secret motions cannot but be observed by a watchful eye, and a timorous conscience; whereas in the lukewarm Christian tepidity and negligence have, by weakening the lights of faith, and fortifying the passions, spread such clouds over the soul, that she cannot judge truly of the law, nor of what passes in her own thoughts, but will ever be apt to deceive herself. Above all, such persons are most easily deceived into sins of omission, and into a destruction of the queen of all virtues—charity. Is it not much to be feared, that the love of God above all things reigns no longer in a life all made up of softness, sloth, sensuality, and self-love, especially as no mark, nor character of that divine love appears in it? What appearance that a soul loves God above all things, (which is the essence of this divine virtue,) that shows no disposition but that of a mercenary, the fear of hell, seeking nothing more than to escape eternal punishment? It is a mark of charity to be timorous, to exaggerate dangers and evils, to labour for salvation in fear and trembling. "*Sed aggravat, sed exaggerat universa,*" says St. Bernard. This path has been that of all the just of all ages. How contrary is that of the tepid? They throw themselves on the left side, as far as they dare, compatibly with the fear of hell, and are afraid of the safe or of the right path. Another mark of charity is, that it is always active, always lively. Love is indefatigable; it never ceases. What sign of this divine fire in a heart indolent and slothful to everything, that concerns the service of God? Ah, tepid soul! what reason have we to fear, that the threat of our Redeemer belongs to thee: "Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead," Apoc. ii. 1; or that other: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

3. Tepidity leads souls still farther into the most fatal ruin. This conscience is clear from experience; reason also shows it: for by tepidity the source of graces is drained, and on the other side passions are strengthened. Without the succours of divine grace, it is impossible for a soul to persevere in justice. As the hand of the Creator must always preserve the

being it has once given us, or, otherwise, it would every instant fall into its original nothing; so that the spiritual life of the soul must be always maintained by the grace of him who gave it. It is preserved only by this continual dependance on its succours. In the just, the fidelity to grace continually draws down other graces: but the negligence and infidelities of the lukewarm drain up that source; as a just punishment, God withdraws them. Nothing can be more just than this conduct. Tepid souls, enter into judgment with God. You neglect to give him marks of your fidelity; you dispute everything with him, and are you upon your guard, lest you should give him too much. You count with your God, as I may say, and watch to set his love bounds in your heart; and is it not reasonable, that he should prescribe bounds to his bounty to you, and repay your indifference for him by a return of indifference for you, and by refusing the liberal dispensation of his more powerful graces, which you do not prepare yourselves to receive, but make yourselves unworthy of? On the other hand, the passions are strengthened. Tepidity is an habitual indulgence of them; they cannot be conquered but by being openly resisted. Allowing them certain bounds, gratifying them to a certain point, fortifies and stirs them up, as throwing a small handful of food to a devouring lion, does not satisfy his hunger, but rouses him and makes him more furious. They grow too violent to be restrained. At the same time, the path of sin becomes more open and easy; the heart has already made its approaches very near it, even to its very borders, and has but one small step more to take, and a step almost insensible: nay, it often makes it without perceiving it is gone so far. And what makes the fall of a tepid soul quite desperate is, that she herself is ignorant of it; her misery is hidden from her own eyes; like Jerusalem, she knows not the judgments that are hanging over her head. How will she be surprised at the approach of death, when she will too late see her whole past life to be a chaos, which she cannot unravel, and in which she can see nothing clear; but that it was all filled with a love of the world, indolence in prayer and every virtue, duties satisfied by halves, secret antipathies, fondnesses, complaisances, and a thousand defects never discovered, and conseqently never bewailed; she will then see, that she has been guilty of an uninterrupted ingratitude against God, and a continued infidelity to his inspirations. She will remember, that the unprofitable servant who hid his talent was condemned, and will tremble to see that all her life, or the greater part of it has been unprofitable; made up of self-love, sensual affections, pleasures, and diversions. She will see the negligence with which she performed spiritual duties, and justly fear, that sacraments so received were sacrileges, and prayer so performed abomination before God. She will see, that her tepid life not only robbed God of *her* own heart, but that her evil example, and vain conversations, treacherously defrauded him of the affections and service of others.

A tepid soul deprives herself of all the sweets of virtue, especially of that peace of conscience and unction of the Holy Ghost, which make the yoke of Christ light and pleasant to the fervent. She must be a stranger to the peace of conscience, whose whole life appears even to herself to have been spent in a thousand daily transgressions. She has no share in the unction of the Holy Ghost, which spreads a sweetness over the most austere practices of virtue, and fills zealous souls with consolation and joy. Nor has she anything of that relish and pleasure, which true love and fervour find in the exercises of piety. She bears the whole yoke of

the law, without any ease or comfort under it, because she would only carry it by halves. Hence St. Bernard thus addresses himself to tepid souls: "All of you know true virtue, and its paths; but the will of all is not the same in them. Some run, or rather fly, in everything: to these, watchings are short, abstinence sweet, and labour desirable. But others walk not so: they are only dragged, nay, are scarcely dragged or compelled by the fear of hell, and march with a dry heart, and with reluctancy. There are many such, who eat the same bread with us, sleep with us, pray with us, work with us, sharers with us in all our tribulations, but not in our comforts; truly miserable and unhappy. These, at length, either sink under the burden, and fall, or live on in a kind of hell on earth, never aspiring at the light of God's mercies, nor to that liberty of spirit, which alone makes the yoke sweet and the burden light."

Tepid souls, by their habitual indolence, are quite indisposed to be moved by divine grace. The Holy Ghost is all fire, all action, all vigour. But tepidity plunges a soul into a state of langour, which enervates her, and takes away all her strength, all her life, and makes her even incapable of any good, or of being inspired with courage and vigour, without which there can be no virtue. Thus she is often more indisposed to receive any advantage from grace than habitual sinners. The exterior means of grace are also unprofitable to her. The sacraments are dangerous in her state, and, tepidly received, at best amuse her langour; but do not heal her. Prayer, the great channel of graces, is little or no resource, in the slothful manner in which she has recourse to it. Exhortations, pious books, alarming calls of God awake her not, because she flatters herself that all goes well with her. Is not, then, her state in a manner desperate? Cassian, that great master of a spiritual life, writes thus of it, Collat. iv. c. 19: "We have often seen souls converted to perfection from a state of coldness, that is, from among worldlings and heathens, but have never seen any from amongst tepid Christians, who are also so detestable to God, that he commands his preachers, by his Prophet, not to exhort them in vain, but abandon them as a fruitless barren ground, and sow the divine word on new hearts among heathens and sinners. 'Plough up the new land, and do not sow on this ground overgrown with thorns.'" Jer. iv. 3. My soul, tremble at thy past lukewarm life; retrieve what thou hast lost, by redoubling thy fervour from this moment.

MEDITATION V.

ON THE VIOLATION OF THE PRECEPT OF TENDING TO PERFECTION:— THAT PERFECTION IS COMMANDED TO ALL.

To aim at perfection in virtue is a precept to all persons. Perfection is compatible with all states and professions. It may be observed in the smallest actions.

1. The general pretext of tepid souls is, that they do not, or in their station in the world cannot, aim at perfection. This is a great illusion of our spiritual enemy, and a gross mistake. Almighty God, in commanding all men to serve him, has commanded that all serve him perfectly, or by

an heroic or eminent virtue. Lame or imperfect services can never be agreeable to God; they can only undervalue his infinite majesty, and depreciate the eternal kingdom, which is the recompense he has destined to his faithful servants. When the Jews offered the lame, the weak, or sick beasts among their cattle in the old law, he disdained to accept such sacrifices from their hands, and bade them present such to their temporal prince, and see if he would receive them. Mal. i. 8. The Babylonian king would have none to wait upon him but such as in whom there was no spot. And certainly God will rank none amongst his servants, who do not study to appear before him spotless and perfect. Imperfections, or small faults of frailty, without which we cannot live on earth, unless by an extraordinary privilege of grace, (such as was granted to the blessed Virgin,) and which are speedily blotted out in the just by compunction and sincere repentance, do not destroy this perfection, as they are not faults of adhesion but of surprise, and are immediately repaired again. But it is not so of habitual tepidity, or a deliberate resolution of not watching against venial sin, or not giving a man's self to God entirely with his whole heart and with all his strength, which is the first and greatest of God's commandments. It is true, indeed, that all the means of perfection are not of precept to all; such as those we call evangelical counsels, which are great helps to the more easily attaining perfect virtue; but it is not in them that perfection consists. These the religious embrace, by their perpetual inclosure, renouncing the world, and consecrating themselves to God by the three solemn vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity, and by the observance of a rule consisting of various exercises of virtues. On account of such means of perfection, we call one state more perfect than another, either because it furnishes more easy and more powerful means of perfection, or affords occasions of more heroic acts of virtue. Thus, St. Thomas observes, that the state of bishops is the most perfect of all states, as it furnishes the means of practising the greatest virtues in co-operating with Christ in his ministry in the conversion of souls: yet SS. Augustin and Chrysostom think few are saved in that holy character, but that more perish in it, because it is attended with great dangers and high obligations. Amongst religious orders those are esteemed most perfect, which furnish the greatest means of perfection. But it is not the habit that makes the monk, nor the state of life that makes the saint: many in the most perfect states will be cast forth at the last day, and others from the east and from the west will be called in, and seated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. The reason is, because perfection consists only in the perfect love of God. He is the greatest saint, who loves God most perfectly, and labours to do his will in all things with the greatest fervour. This is that perfection, which is commanded not only to priests and religious, but to all men. But it is to be attained by different means, according as particular states and obligations differ. The tepid, therefore, who are only for a limited virtue—for a certain degree of virtue—violate the precept, by which all men are bound to aim at continually advancing in the love of God, and in serving him with all their strength. Christ said not to the apostles only, but to all his followers: "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matt. v. 48. And St. Paul uses the word *saint* for a Christian, because every Christian is bound to be a saint. "To all the saints at Ephesus." "To all the saints at Philippi." "To all the saints at Colosse," &c.

None but saints can enter heaven: "nothing defiled can enter there." As then we desire to reign in heaven, we must all aim to be saints, all strive to be perfect. Yes, my soul, God says to thee, as he did to Abraham: "Walk before me, and be perfect."

2. Many are affrighted at the very name of perfection, and imagine it breathes nothing but tears and excessive austerities; or that it consists in raptures and lofty contemplations, of which they are incapable. Several think it is incompatible with their state of life, and the care of worldly affairs. This is all a mistake. It neither consists in, nor requires extraordinary rigours, nor high contemplations; it requires neither learning, nor parts, nor a great genius; it consists in a heart capable of loving God. This all men have; the poor and the simple have often less obstacles than the rich or the learned. Nor is perfection inconsistent with worldly states and callings; on the contrary, it perfects them all; for it is the perfect Christian that makes the best prince, the best courtier, the best citizen, the best tradesman, the best master, and the best servant. God invites all to perfection—he enjoins it to all men. It must then consist in something, of which all are capable, and which is easy and open to all, to the great, the small, the learned, and the unlearned. For he declares: "The precept which I command thee is not above thee, nor placed far from thee, nor situate in heaven, nor beyond the sea; but this my command is near thee very much, in thy own mouth, and in thy heart to do it." Deut. xxx. 11, 14. It is entirely so; for perfection consists first in the performing of the great duties of religion with the most fervent dispositions, as prayer, frequenting the sacraments, &c. 2ndly, In performing our ordinary actions and every part of our respective professions in the most perfect manner, and out of the purest and most perfect motive of doing by them the will of God. For what is perfect virtue but the doing the will of God? It is his most holy will that is the rule of all virtue. The merit of actions must be equal, if his will be equally found in them; and those are most perfect, that are most conformable to it. Now it is evidently the holy will of God, that every man acquit himself in the best manner of all the duties of his state in the world. All lawful states are good and necessary for the conservation and government of the world. God is the author of them all; and, as he is the all-wise and holy governor of this world which he created, he would have all these professions subsist and carried on well in it. Therefore, a master employed in looking after the affairs of his family, a nobleman in managing his estate, a husbandman in his tillage, a servant in his master's business, does the will of God. This is so true, that, were any man to neglect the affairs of his province, though for the purpose of praying, or visiting hospitals, he would sin before God. "If any man has not care of his own, principally his domestics, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," by transgressing one of the first duties of religion. The reason is, that whatever holy action we do we please not God, unless we do what he requires of us; no more, says St. Francis of Sales, (Maxims,) than a painter drawing an eagle pleases him that desired the picture of a bee. For it can never be agreeable to God, if we give him one thing when he requires another. Hence, our divine Redeemer, coming to convert men to the service of his heavenly Father, did not displace them, or make them change their lawful conditions. And St. Paul bids those who, when called to the faith, were free, to remain free, and

those that were slaves to remain content, and serve God in that condition. He only exhorts every one to "walk worthy the vocation, in which he was called." Thus, true virtue is most consistent with all lawful states; it requires little more than the same actions; only it adds to them exactness and constancy, and it enobles them by the supernatural motive of the love of God, and the pure view of doing his will. The same we may say of all the necessities of nature, as eating, sleeping, &c., all of which virtue sanctifies by performing them for the holy will of God.

This truth may be also demonstrated by many other principles: for it is evident, that virtue ought to be habitual to us, and the practice of it continual. We must be holy, not by fits, but by habit, both at home and abroad, in all places, and at all times. Consequently, our perfection cannot consist in great and extraordinary actions, which must of course be rare, as occasions of them seldom occur. Our life is made up of ordinary actions. There are many great saints before God, who never did anything extraordinary for him, and their sanctity is more secure because hidden from the eyes of the world, and consisting in what is common, and what others do equally with them, but not in the same spirit. They are saints, not by works, which appear before men; but by the interior virtue of their heart. This stamps a value on all they do. By this they perfectly seek the will of God in all the common actions of life, knowing it is only his holy will that gives every virtue its value; that without it the greatest actions are nothing, and with it the meanest become highly meritorious. We read of nothing extraordinary in the life of the queen of saints, the blessed Virgin Mary. Our Saviour himself, who came to be our model of perfection, who always did what was most pleasing to his Father, and, as the Jews said of him, did all things well and the best, led a hidden life for thirty years, in which he did nothing great or wonderful. The infinite perfection of his divine actions consisted in this, that whether he ate or slept, worked with his supposed father, or helped his poor mother, or whatever else he did, his motive was always to fulfil the will of his heavenly Father. Thus, he gave us a pattern of our perfection in all our respective stations and private lives. As St. Francis of Sales remarks: "Those then are to be blamed, who, engaged in any vocation, desire the opportunities of others, neglecting their own, and consuming themselves and their time in unprofitable wishes." Introduct. c. 2, p. 2. My soul, do thou, on the contrary bless God, and be filled with joy, that he has put the means of thy sanctification so easy, so near to thee, in thy own breast. I only have to do in a true and perfect spirit what I otherwise do every day, to be a great saint. I will then say with the spouse in the Canticles: "I have reserved all my fruits for you," Cant. viii. 13; doing all the actions of my life, small as well as great, for your love, my God.

3. God has annexed his greatest graces and promises to the smallest actions performed with fidelity and fervour. One single heroic sacrifice in Abraham obtained for him the highest recompence. One small obedience in Saul would have established his kingdom for ever. The wise man finds a great commendation of the valiant woman in this, that she was industrious in handling her distaff. It is thus, that by small things a soul attracts the favour of her heavenly spouse. Indeed, what are the greatest actions to God? They can be no accession to his glory, or to the bliss which he possesses in himself, and which is independent on all creatures; nor does he stand in need of any external glory from them. He is infinitely above

the greatest homage we can pay him. If he accept our little services, it is from his goodness. He regards in them the affection, not the action; the heart, not the hand. An heroic fidelity in doing all our actions for God, with exactness and fervour, is the greatest sacrifice of ourselves, and the most honourable to God of all that we can offer him. It is a continual crucifixion and sacrifice of self-love, and of all our passions. It is to make God truly the Lord of our whole lives; we then give to him not certain works set apart for him—not some passing interrupted actions, intermingled with many others of self-love and the world; but offer to him a continual sacrifice of our whole selves, with all our affections, state, employments, thoughts, words, and works, even every breath we draw. We are all his, for "we are his workmanship in Christ Jesus." Eph. xi. 3. We are all his, being bought by him at a great price, the blood of the immaculate Lamb. "You are not your own therefore," says St. Paul, "*Non estis vestri.*" Hence the same Apostle says: "None of us lives to himself." "*Nemo nostrum sibi vivit.*" Rom. xiv. 7. Observe how general his words are: No one, neither king, nor statesman, nor lawyer, nor labourer, nor married man; and no moment of our lives, neither sleeping nor waking, nor working, nor playing, nor eating, nor conversing. We must be "pleasing to God through all things; fructifying in every good work." Why? because "we are all the Lord's."—"*Domini sumus.*" Rom. xiv. Hence he so frequently exhorts all states: "Let your conversation be worthy of the gospel." Phil. i. 27.

Remember then, my soul, always to walk worthy of God, "*Ut ambuletis digné Deo.*" Living and breathing only to him, as the blessed in heaven live only to him. I will never use my heart, my hands, my eyes, my words, or thoughts to gratify my cupidity; but only for the service of my heavenly spouse.

MEDITATION VI.

ON THE MANNER OF PERFORMING WELL OUR ORDINARY ACTIONS.

To perform our ordinary actions well, they must be done; 1. With a good intention; 2. With fervour; 3. With regularity and exactness.

1. It is not the doing of good actions, but the doing of them well, that will make them agreeable to God. "They who shall do just things, in a just manner, shall be justified." Sap. vi. 11. The difference between the saint, the tepid Christian, and the sinner, consists not always in the actions; but in the manner of performing them, in the intention and fervency with which they are done. This makes the same work perfect, imperfect, or sinful. "The light of thy body is the eye," says Christ. "If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome, but if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darkness." Mat. vi. 22, 23. He calls the intention the light and the eye of the soul, because by it we direct our actions to God, or to other ends, and our actions derive their value from the intention. If a man give alms out of vanity, the action is sinful; if out of mere natural compassion, it is a moral action, but not meritorious in the eye of heaven; if out of the love of God, and to do *his* will, it is then meritorious and an action of charity. In the same manner, our actions, to serve the necessi-

ties of nature, as eating, sleeping, moderate recreation, and the employments of our state of life, are made by the intention *bad*, if in them we seek ourselves through avarice, sloth, or sensuality, or even if we neglect to refer them to God; or *good*, if we do them with the view of God's will, and for his love. For it is his will that we maintain our being and strength for his service, and use moderately certain lawful comforts of life, and necessary recreation, to recruit our strength, and go on with greater fervour and cheerfulness in the labours of virtue. As a traveller on the road stops sometimes to repose and refresh himself, and does not by that loiter or lose his time, providing he rest not too frequently nor too long, and always remembers he is but refreshing himself the better to continue his journey. Sloth and passions are both the motive and the effect of too great indulgence of nature, of superfluity and delicacy in the table, or of spending too much time in diversions, or of eagerness and attachment to them. On this account, those persons cannot but be guilty, who employ a considerable part of their time in amusements and diversions. But moderate relaxation is sanctified by a good intention, as are all the employments of every good state of life: for, it is the will of God that the gentleman look after his family and estate, the tradesman after his business, &c. Nay, Almighty God, by placing them in that station, allotted them that employment as their proper exercise. When he placed Adam in the garden of Eden, he commanded him to prune and keep it. With what care then ought not I to watch over my heart, and form this good intention in all my actions? This is the great art of arts, which makes every moment, every action of my life, a seed of an immortal crown: this is the true philosophical stone, which turns even dirt into gold, and which makes my whole life a perfect uninterrupted sacrifice to God. "*Et glebae illius aurum.*" Job xxviii. 6. But it is a gross mistake, that a speculative offering in mere words is sufficient for this, or that some sign without reflection should have this effect. The intention must really move the heart, and be the true cause of the action. It must be carefully and seriously made in the morning, by offering all the actions of the day to God, nor will this alone suffice. Interrupted by various distractions, it cannot really influence all the works and thoughts of the whole day. It must be renewed frequently and attentively at different times in the day, and particularly in the beginning of every chief action. As the archer levels his eye to hinder the dissipation of his sight, and keep the line of its direction straight, so must we shut our hearts to all sinister respects, and place our whole view and attention on God, and the accomplishment of his will. The primitive Christians did this, by making the sign of the cross on their foreheads, before and after every action; before rising from a seat or sitting down, lighting a fire or a candle, or extinguishing it, going out of doors or coming in. This Tertullian witnesses; De coron. mil. We may do it by privately making that holy sign on our breast, seriously offering our heart and action to the honour of the adorable Trinity, through the merits of Christ's passion; or, at least, by saying in our hearts most frequently: "Purely for thy holy honour and love, O God." Or, "For thee purely I make this visit, eat, suffer, labour, &c." Or, addressing ourselves to our Saviour, thus: "I do this in union with thy divine intention in actions on earth, to the honour of thy heavenly Father I do this; may the fervour of thine supply the imperfection of mine." Or, sometimes thinking on the fervour and purity of the intention, with which the blessed Virgin swept the house, or did other

like actions, unite our spirit for the same end; or with that with which the angels and other blessed spirits incessantly praise the Lord.

2. This intention, to be perfect, must be pure, *i. e.* without any mixture of seeking ourselves. But how rare is this perfect purity of intention! Many went to see Jesus, not for himself alone, but also to see Lazarus.

It must also be fervent. Our Saviour called it "his food to do the will of his Father." How solicitous and ardent are courtiers to anticipate the least hints of their king's commands? St. Dorotheus excited himself to continual fervour by remembering, how in the study of profane eloquence in the world he thought every hour too short, forgot the necessities of his body, and could not eat without having a book open before him, to read at the same time. "How much greater ardour," said he, "ought I to bring, in labouring for virtue and heaven?" Doctr. 10. bill. part. 7. 4. Had we a true idea of heaven, or of the majesty of God, our fervour would be continual and without bounds. It is fervour which draws down God's graces. "Cursed is he that does the work of God negligently." An ancient abbot, seeing a monk labour slothfully, asked him for whom he worked? For God's honour, answered he. Are you not then ashamed, said the abbot, to do this more slothfully for God than you would do it for me? Our Judge will reproach us for such sloth in the service of God, as he did the bishop of Sardis: "I find not thy works full before my God." Apoc. iii. 2. The perfection and recompense of our actions depend entirely on the spirit and fervour of our soul, with which they are done. According to this, actions produce their fruit, some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. Matt. xiii. 8. "Thus all the glory of a soul is from her inward disposition." Ps. xliv. 14. Nor does God consider how much, but from how ardent an affection she gives. "*Non quantum, sed ex quanto.*" Cypr. de opere & eleem. He valued more the widow's two mites than the large alms of all the rest. "It is thy intention and fervour that gives the name or stamp of value to thy actions," says S. Ambrose, L. 1. Offic. c. 30. "From how great ardour it proceeds, just so much is it valued at. See how just is thy Judge: he first asks thy own soul how she values her work." Nay, he equally rewards the will, though the work do not follow. "The will is acceptable according to what it has," says the Apostle. As much as the will increases, so much is the merit enhanced. God counted to Abraham the sacrifice of his son as actually done, though he had only executed it in his intention. "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy son," &c. A devout preacher, reaping no fruit by his labours amongst souls, said: "Not the less upon this account, O Lord, wilt thou repay my labours."—"*Non minus solves Domine, non minus solves.*"

My soul, what ought to be thy care always to increase this fervour in every action! For this end, do every work as if it were to be the last of thy life, or as if it were the only sacrifice of thyself thou couldst ever make to God. This is the advice of St. Thomas of Aquin., Opusc. 62, t. 17: "We ought to do every action in union with all the fervour of Christ's infinite actions to supply our weakness, and all the favour of the saints in heaven and on earth, and out of all possible earnestness, as if all our salvation, all the praise of God, and good of souls depended on it, as if the only action we had to do was to glorify God. Take care, in doing any action, not to be eager to go to the next. This would impair thy earnestness in thy present employ. Do what thou art about well, and with thy utmost diligence; then calmly give thy attention to the following." Let thy

fervour be always sedate and calm, without hurry or anxiety, yet never let it flag. The continual practice of placing thyself in the presence of God, by frequent aspirations, will be the greatest help to this. Love will give new wings to every work, as it does to the angels in executing God's will.

3. *Regularity* is a condition necessary to a virtuous life. It is itself a virtue, and adds a value to every action. God is the God of order; he shows how agreeable it is to him by the wonderful and beautiful order which shines in the heavens and their movements, and in all his other works. Besides, regularity is necessary to fix inconstancy and fickleness. Fervour does not always remain equal. Regularity prevents its slackening, and keeps us from neglecting any of our exercises of piety. One of the greatest advantages in a religious is the perfect regularity which chalks out the will of God in every action and circumstance. Even in this world, it is impossible for any one to serve God, who does not reduce this life to some degree of rule, and who has not fixed times for prayer and other general duties. God can never be served in a life of confusion. Disorder is from the devil. Holy writ describes hell as a place where no order dwells. The saints all led regular lives even in courts, as king David, St. Lewis, King Alfred, &c. Exactness is also requisite in our actions to perform all of them in their due time, place, and manner. A fidelity in giving to each action all its circumstances is extremely pleasing to God; and a failure in any one must always be an imperfection, and lessen its effects. This exactness on our side moves Almighty God abundantly to repay our fidelity with his extraordinary graces and favours. "Thou wilt be holy with the holy, and elect with the elect, and thou wilt be perverse with the perverse."

Thus, my soul, regulate all thy actions; consider them as the will of God, perform them in a true spirit of religion, purely with a view to God, and for his love, with fervour, order, and precision, studying to be "perfect and failing in nothing," Ja. i. 4; that, when the Lord comes, thou be found a faithful servant. According to the advice of the wise man, Eccl. xxxiii, "Excel", *i. e.* aim at what is heroical in all thy works. Never desire impossible circumstances nor other states of life. God, by placing thee in thy particular station, has marked out thy exercises and the path of perfection, in which thou art to sanctify thyself. Men seek to confound the paths of virtue, and to be what they are not, because they would follow virtue by caprice, inclination, and whim. They mistake a restlessness of mind for zeal. Fall not into that stratagem of the enemy of thy salvation, "and lift not thy eyes to riches thou canst not obtain." Prov. xxiii. 5. Apply thyself with ardour to the virtues suitable to thy state, and to perform all its duties and functions as the work which God has allotted to thee. It is the perfection of thy station, not that of a bishop, a monk, or a prince, which he expects at thy hands. Never look on any action of thy life as too small to be offered to God, or not worth thy utmost attention. He is great and rich, but he knows that thou art little and poor. This is what thou hast in thy hands to give him; it is all thou art worth for the present. Give him this, then, with a great heart, *corde magno et animo volenti*, and so disposed, that if thou hadst anything greater to offer, thou wouldst be most ready to do it. He will look upon it as done; for he is infinitely rich and good, and wants not our gifts, but is only infinitely desirous of our heart and good will. Increase then, and dilate thy heart and affections in every

action by desires. If thou weepest before God, wish thou couldst bring the whole earth to weep with thee: if thou offerest thy heart, wish thou couldst offer him the hearts and affections of all creatures, and rejoice that he possesses infinite joy and bliss within himself. If thou labourest for him, desire to spend the last drop of thy blood in his service, for so great a master, and so great a glory. Before every action, by a short aspiration, offer it with fervour to God, and beg his grace to do his will in it as perfectly as thy heart is able, saying: Incline unto my aid, or the like, and wishing it could do it more perfectly, and in a manner worthy of so great and so good a Lord. To supply thy deficiencies, offer the actions of Christ, cover thine with them to receive an ample benediction, and to pay an homage worthy of thy God. Thy heavenly Father will no sooner have felt the sweet odour of his Son's garments but he will accept thy sacrifice, embrace thee tenderly, and enrich thee with his gifts; for "in his beloved Son he has made us acceptable." Ephes. i. 6.

But the recompenses promised ought to excite our fervour in good works, which produce an eternal weight of glory. Even a cup of cold water given for God will have its reward. Matt. x. 30. God counts every hair of his elect every step for his service. What a rich mine is here opened to us? What a wonderful commerce? We give temporal for eternal, light and easy for what is immense. All the actions of our lives are seeds of eternity. Our Saviour assures us of the very smallest, that it shall not lose its reward. Matt. x. 42. No; it shall shine for perpetual eternities. Dan. xii. If we neglect to lay up stores of good works now, we shall beg hereafter, when it will be too late. "The slothful man would not plough for the cold. He shall therefore beg in summer, and nothing shall be given him." Prov. xx. 4. "He shall not be crowned who has not fought lawfully." 1 Cor. xi. 8. Heaven is our inheritance; but by Adam's fall we lost our title to it. Christ restored us again to it by his passion, but on condition that it should be to us a kingdom of conquest. It is to be taken by us, as it were, by main force. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away." Matt. xi. 12. "What things a man shall have sown by his works, such also shall he reap." My soul, choose a good method and a good guide or director in the paths of virtue; but do not lightly change or forsake them.

MEDITATION VII.

ON THE DELAY OF REPENTANCE.

1. A delay of repentance in a state of mortal sin, is a grievous crime.
2. It increases the difficulties of conversion.
3. It is the high road to final impenitence.

1. A great obstacle to souls in the service of God is a delay of repentance. Sinners design to be saved, but put off their conversion from day to day. By this stratagem the devil secures them to himself. For it not only holds them in his chains, but is a new sin, and leads ordinarily to final impenitence and eternal reprobation. He who is in a state of mor-

tal sin, and defers his conversion for any considerable time, sins grievously; and this on many accounts. Such a delay is a sin against the charity which he owes to his own soul, by exposing it to the imminent danger of damnation by sudden death, of which there is a moral danger in any considerable space of time. To undertake in such a state a dangerous expedition, or a sea voyage, would undoubtedly be a mortal sin. There is always no less danger of a sudden death during a long delay, considering the innumerable accidents to which human life is subject. Therefore, to live so much unprepared, must be a mortal sin and an extreme folly in a point of such utmost consequence. Is there not a moral danger of being surprised by sudden death in any one month, or a less term? Many thousands, doubtless, now suffer in hell, who were suddenly cut off, soon after committing one mortal sin. In so important an affair, it must be the greatest madness to sleep, even one night, in such a state, without making a most sincere act of contrition, and forming the warmest purpose of amendment.

He who defers his conversion, exposes himself generally to immediate danger of falling into other mortal sins. For experience shows, that a soul remaining wilfully under the slavery of the devil is easily drawn, nay sinks of herself, continually lower in it. "A sin, which repentance does not blot out, by its own weight draws to another sin," says St. Gregory the Great, (Mor. l. 25, c. 9,) which sentence has passed from St. Thomas into a maxim of the schools. To some persons, ever so short a delay may be an immediate occasion of sin, and consequently is itself a new mortal sin.

A delay of repentance violates that divine precept: "Defer not to be converted to the Lord." Eccl. v. 8.

We are obliged to an immediate reconciliation with an offended brother; much more with God, if we have injured him. We are bound immediately to restore what belongs to our neighbour: it must, therefore, be an injustice to God to delay restoring to him the heart which belongs to him.

Such a delay shows an obstinate attachment to sin, and is an interpretative choice of God's enmity. "Hast thou offended God and forgettest it? Behold a second offence and a second enmity," says St. Chrysostom, (Hom. 42, in 2 Cor.) It is highly to undervalue the divine friendship, the most inestimable of all goods. These reasons are urged by St. Thomas, (2. 28, 29. 62, a. ult,) St. Bonaventure, (in 4, Dist. 17, 10, a. 2,) St. Antoninus, (3 p. tit. 14, c. lv. n. 2,) &c.

One, who remains in the state of mortal sin, loses the merits of all the good works he does for that time. He loses all the advantages, for which he lives, who does not live to God, says St. Augustin; "*Perdit quod vivit, qui Deo non vivit.*" To choose such a state must be a strange insensibility to a man's own great interest.

Does not the very misery of his own condition move the sinner to hasten out of it! He is fallen into the stinking mire of sin, and is become horrible in the sight of God and his angels, yet he defers to cleanse himself. Sin, worse than any robber, has stripped his immortal soul of all her spiritual riches and graces, without leaving so much as one; yet he does not hasten to recover so great a treasure. His soul has received a mortal wound; yet he gives it time to grow incurable before he applies a remedy. Had a man drunk poison, could he be one moment at ease till he had taken an antidote to repel it? Had he received a wound in his body, would he

put off the cure till it might mortify, and form a gangrene? Had he been robbed of his temporal goods, would he neglect immediately seeking to recover them? Strange blindness! not to do for his immortal soul what he would be so earnest to do for the least temporal commodity. "You wish for a long life," says St. Augustin, (Serm. 20, t. 5. p. 109,) "only to repent hereafter, and in the mean while lead a bad life. Thus you wish for a long evil. Why do not you rather desire a long good? You would have all other things good, a good garment, a good villa, a good house; you only choose a bad life; and yet you prefer life to all those other things." Expostulate a little, my soul, with the delaying sinner on this insensibility in his own regard: expostulate also with him on his conduct towards God. Let him, if he be able, stand the insulting reproaches of his own conscience in the meantime. Let him sink under the confusion with which they must cover him.

God commands, invites, and presses the sinner in the most tender manner to return to him. Hear his sweet voice, my soul. He cries out: "Son give me thy heart." Prov. xxiii. 25. It has been long tyrannized over, and harassed under the slavery of the devil, the world, and its merciless passions. It has long been a stranger to peace and true comfort. It is mine; it was created only for me, and it can find no rest but in me. Can you refuse so long to give it peace, to restore it to its centre, and offer it to me, who am its Maker, its happiness, and its God? O souls redeemed by the blood of Christ, framed by the hand of God only to love him, harden not your hearts against his most merciful call. But what do the delayers answer? What I scarcely dare repeat for horror. "Command," say they, "command again: expect, expect again." Isa. xxviii. 10. "Who ever heard such horrible things?" Jer. xviii. 13.

Unthinking sinners, is this the manner in which you treat your kindest God? Are these your thanks for his mercies? "Is this what you return to the Lord, O foolish and unwise people?" Deut. xxxii. 6. Because God is so merciful as to have hitherto borne you with patience, you presume to go on offending him in hopes of the like impunity. "Because sentence is not immediately executed upon the wicked, therefore, the sons of men commit evil without fear." Eccles. viii. 11. What is this consequence they draw? Because God is good, they will be boldly wicked. O ingratitude! O insensibility! O blasphemy! One would imagine by these proceedings, that sinners take Almighty God only for a God in jest. But he will arise and revenge his own cause, and strike such presumption with his most just, but most terrible judgments. For this delay is not only a horrible crime and presumption; but also the high road to final impenitence.

2. The delaying sinner is in the high road to final impenitence; for he promises himself three things, which are not in his power, viz., time to come, grace, and a will disposed to repent. Each of these points deserves to be considered apart. First, as to the will which he thinks himself most certainly master of, it will, in all appearance, be more averse to the beginning of this work hereafter than it is at present, and it will certainly have much greater difficulties to encounter. For we must observe, that his will cannot form one good true desire towards a conversion without grace, which will be much weakened and withdrawn on one side, whilst he on the other becomes every day more and more incapable of seeking God. So that he will only have such a command of his will, such a power as Pha-

roah had, such as the sinner absolutely *can*, but, morally speaking, never *will* use, and which will only contribute to his guilt.

He thinks the difficulties too great, for want of courage to undertake the work at present. He would be glad to wait till his chains fall off themselves, and a conversion may cost him no violence. But his expectation is chimerical and extravagant. Passions can never be overcome, nor habits broken, without conflicts. Difficulties will grow much greater by delay; for by it a sinner is farther removed from God, and more deeply engaged in his criminal habits. As many days of delay, so many sins; as many abuses of grace, so many new chains. If a man found a hundred pounds weight heavy, would he wait till his burden should be increased to a thousand? Or if one single chain was hard to break, would he defer till his fetters were doubled? Yet this is the extravagance of the delaying sinner. Old age itself, which abates the heat of youth, strengthens habits long cherished. "A physician easily cuts off a new distemper; a long sickness perplexes him." Eccl. x. 12.

The very habit of delaying, and the fear of setting about the work, grow upon the soul exceedingly. This the experience of all ages shows as to delayers. To-morow consumes years, and spins out the longest age; it is still always to-morrow, never to-day, and at the end farther from beginning than at first. This the very heathen poets and philosophers witness. One of them very justly compares the delayer to a fool, sitting on the bank of a river till the stream run dry, that he may pass over it:

> " . . . . He
> Waits till the river pass away, but lo!
> Ceaseless it flows, and will for ever flow."

And another,—till the hindmost chariot wheel overtake the first.

Penance now seems a burden to him. This is because he has not as yet taken the wings of fervour, and loves still to crawl on the dunghill of his affections. Let him by groans and sighs now invite Jesus into his heart, lay open his miseries to him, and implore his pity and pardon. Thus, his sloth will be expelled, and the difficulties vanish. What will he gain by waiting till these be much increased? Ah! it is now time for him to banish sin from his heart, and rescue it from the chains of the devil. "The time past is sufficient to have fulfilled the will of the Gentiles." 1 Pet. iv. 3. "It is time that an end be put to sin, and that iniquity be blotted out, and eternal justice reign." Dan. ix. 34.

3. It belongs to the justice of God, and to the fidelity which he owes to himself and to his own threats, to punish and disappoint the delayer's insolence. He is guilty of tempting God many ways, of presuming on his mercy, and of abusing his grace. He arrogates to himself the assurance of time and grace, two things purely in the disposal of God; he fixes to God a time for his mercy; he designs to defeat his justice by a cheat, and resists his most gracious calls.

He promises to himself, that he shall have time to do penance hereafter. But of time, God has reserved the entire disposal to himself. Who, in his senses, would walk and sleep on the sharp edge of a fatal precipice? You are here every moment in imminent danger of gliding into hell; as every moment some accident may bereave you of life. If you live, what prospect does even life afford? Is continuance in sin a means to incline God to mercy? He who sues for pardon, refrains from new insults: these obstruct mercy; they cannot dispose for it

' Besides time, grace is also necessary, for a true conversion. And will not God justly refuse to such a presumptuous delay a gratuitous gift, which he owes to no sinner? Such an arrogance certainly calls for this punishment. The deferring sinner designedly would rob God of the best part of his life, and that which he is most jealous of, to consecrate it to the devil; and reserve to him only the wretched remains, the dregs which are the refuse of the world and sin. "*Et de reliquo ejus idolum faciam.*" Isa. xliv. 19.

What is still more injurious, he endeavours to put a cheat upon Almighty God, and to get heaven by a trick. For what is his conduct better than this? God assures us we cannot enjoy both this world and the next, or join together the pleasures of sin here and his eternal joys. But the wretch intends, as it were, to defeat his threat, and the just law of his providence, by a formal project of enjoying this world; and yet, by an after-game of a late repentance, of gaining heaven in the end. But God is not to be imposed upon by foolish impiety. He is above human cunning. He will defeat such impious senseless measures. This intended repentance must be his work—his grace must effect it. To punish such insults and presumption, will he not withdraw his more powerful graces, and abandon such a soul to a spiritual blindness, to a false death-bed repentance, or sudden death without even an appearance of any repentance, which will put the seal to her reprobation? "Ye have said: We have struck a bargain with death, and have made a compact with hell. Your bargain with death shall be made void, and your contract with hell shall not stand." Isaiah xlviii. 18.

The insult of a delay implies likewise such an open abuse of grace, that if we again consider this circumstance, we still more clearly see that it is a most heinous crime, and which calls for an extraordinary vengeance upon the sinner. Can we reflect on the baseness of his conduct, and not cry out in astonishment with the prophet: "God gave him place of repentance, and he abuses it to pride?" Job xxiv. 23. What is more, God solicits him to return with the most tender fatherly affection. He addresses to him his prophets, whose words are daily announced to him, and his ministers rising early in the morning, by whose mouths, both in public and in private, he employs promises, threats, and all other means to conquer his obstinacy. Not content with those exterior calls, he continually speaks to him inwardly in the bottom of his heart by holy inspirations and remorses; crying out incessantly with a secret, but piercing voice, within his soul, and pressing him now to put an end to his crimes, to give peace to his poor heart so long worried and torn by black guilt, cruel remorse, and restless passions; to banish thence those hellish fiends, whose chains he so miserably drags and groans under—to renounce a world and pleasures, whose emptiness every where pursues him, and to begin to live to God, and to secure present and eternal happiness and joy. The sinner, thus pursued and besieged by the mercies of his God everywhere and on every side, yet hardens himself against them, shuts his ears to these calls, fights against him with his own gifts, making use of his graces and benefits only to offend him and fly in his face, and even to apply them as motives and instruments to sin. Of this God complains: "Thou hast made me serve in thy sins." Isa. xliii. 24. Can the fidelity he owes to his own justice and honour suffer this? Can he see himself treated more contemptuously than the meanest servant by a base sinner, whom he

desires to save only out of mercy, but who bids him go away with his graces, to wait till he has surfeited himself with sin, and then to come and visit him again; can God, I say, see this, and bear it? No. He declares by his prophets, that his mercy contemned will at length be converted into fury; that he will answer such a contempt by silence for the future, the most dreadful of all his punishments, and will watch over such ungrateful insolent souls to their destruction, to which they are in the high road, and which he will suffer them to complete by a false death-bed repentance; or will, perhaps, not afford them even an opportunity of that, suddenly cutting them off in the height of their career, and foreclosing for ever their vain hope. "*Vigilabo super eos in malum.*" Jer. xliv. 27.

MEDITATION VIII.

ON DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

SUDDEN death often excludes a possibility of doing penance in the last sickness.

Such a repentance, if performed, is generally false, because only forced.

A conversion then meets with the greatest obstacles.

1. Death-bed repentance is commonly the most wretched and treacherous plank which unthinking delayers are at last, often unawares, reduced to trust their eternity to. It is called a treacherous plank, because the very possibility of procuring it cannot be relied on; and also, because if attempted, it is usually false. Often does sudden death prevent the power of so much as thinking of a conversion in a sinner's last moments. What assurance has he that he will be forewarned of its approach? May it not seize him on a sudden, as a vulture does his unattentive prey? May not lightning, a precipice, water, a stone, a chance shot or stroke, a slip of a horse, a fall of a tree or a house, a thief, a threacherous hand, or some other out of a thousand like accidents, in the twinkling of an eye, cut the thread of his life, and in a moment lodge him in hell?

Even barring external accidents, may not a sudden revolution of humours, a violent apoplexy, a polypus of the heart, or some like unforeseen disorder bereave him of life at once, leaving scarcely one breath of interval between all the signs of perfect health and the sleep of death, or at least the privation of all the senses? Such accidents are common. How often have I heard that one was drowned, found dead in his bed, fallen down dead while walking, conversing at table, at play, or the like? The news of such a death alarmed indeed the person's friends; but the case had nothing in it miraculous, nothing at which, according to the common course of things, they ought to be surprised—nothing but what, according to the ordinary laws of nature and Providence, may happen to any man every day of his life. The delaying sinner has, above all others, the greatest reason to apprehend, lest, in punishment of his presumption, the just hand of God, which rules and orders all things, may conduct natural causes to be thus the instruments of his vengeance on him.

But he hopes that will not be his misfortune. He must, however, allow that it may be so, and that by his rashness he exposes his eternity to a *perhaps*. Ah! in temporal concerns, in last wills and contracts, men carefully add

provisoes and caveats, to exclude not only probabilities, but even mere possibilities. But in their all, in the affair of their eternal salvation, they are content to rely on a perhaps, and can sleep under such a dreadful uncertainty, nay, of their own free deliberate choice, trust it to a thing, for which above all things in the world they can the least answer. If sudden deaths were more extraordinary, and examples of them much rarer than they are, yet the deferring sinner ought still to dread his danger from that quarter, by a justly deserved judgment. Moreover, even the deaths of those who die by lingering diseases, are most of them sudden. Several distempers are treacherous, and do not forebode death by any symptom, before the patient, by a sudden revolution of humours in his body, falls into a short agony, and is soon carried off. Again, deaths even in distempers often proceed from some latent inward gangrene; in which cases no danger is prognosticated before death, as its true cause is hidden and foreign to the visible distemper.

When the distemper itself visibly and gradually leads to death, still men most frequently die suddenly. God, to punish the sinner's delay, often permits the spirit of lying to deceive him to the end, as he did with Ahab. "And the Lord said: Who will deceive Ahab? And an evil spirit went forth and stood before the Lord, and said: I will deceive him. I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said: Thou shalt deceive and prevail." 3 Reg. xxii. 21, 22. So does he permit the lying spirit to deceive the dying sinner.

He usually flatters himself as long as possible, through the love and hopes of life, and a dread of seriously undertaking the work of his conversion. His friends concur for fear of alarming him. From the same motive, the physicians generally study to feed him with vain hopes, not to damp his spirits. Thus he goes on, being also himself desirous to be deceived. Even the last efforts of nature, just before his agony, are often interpreted as symptoms of good hopes. It is often not before he is falling into his agony, that the danger is openly apprehended. Then the house is in uproar; all cry out, he is dying—he is dying. A priest is sent for, who, perhaps, is sick or absent; an affair which never happened before, may have just then, by God's providence, called him abroad. Or, he comes indeed, but has not the key of the sinner's heart, nor talents to be of any great use in moving him, who is scarcely in a condition even to think of himself. Or he finds him speechless, unable even to give a squeeze of the hand or other sign of knowledge. He is, perhaps, out of his senses, or at least already half dead.

As before a conversion was put off for weeks, months, or seasons, now it is for days, or at least hours. He alleges present pains and incapacity, and hopes in an hour or two to be better disposed and more at his ease. If a confession was more early extorted from him, it was done with so much unwillingness, so much by halves, and so much in the hope of a possibility of recovery, as to be very far from securing his great affair. Thus, the death of the sinner is generally unforeseen and unprepared. If a preparation be thought of, it is lame, and only justifies the old comparison, that "not to repent till the approach of death, is to do like a man who should only begin to dig wells to quench the flames, when his house is already on fire."

In these straits, the enemy easily draws such an unhappy soul into presumption or into despair, like the miserable man mentioned by St. Gregory

the Great, who expired lamentably crying out, without being heard by God, " Truce till morning, truce till morning."

2. Penance done by the sinner only at the sight of death is generally false, because often grounded on motives of natural fear, or, at least, on such as are insufficient for a true conversion and perfect change of heart. He has hitherto put off his repentance, and would still if he could. His disposition for delaying is the same as before. This very habit of deferring reigns still in his heart as much as ever, and hinders him from exerting to the utmost even the weak endeavours he is now capable of. If he do some little, this is only because he sees the power of putting off now taken from him. As he has always been a man of projects and resolutions, such he still remains, and such he dies. He is big with schemes and half-wills—employs himself in them till the last breath, but undertakes nothing perfectly.

His attachments to his other criminal habits equally remain, only their objects are removed for the present. For proof hereof, if he recover, he will continue the same man he was. He, indeed, cries out for pardon, and lifts up his eyes to heaven, but it is only because he sees the earth flying from him, and the divine sword hanging naked over his head. His sorrow is not for the injury he has done to God, nor out of any sentiment of love of his heavenly Father ; but a servile fear is the cause of all his tears. The sovereign Judge, who sounds the heart and judges not by appearances, is not to be imposed upon by such treacherous signs. He sees the root of his sinful passions still lurking in the bottom of his soul ; he sees his heart still voluptuous, covetous, ambitious, revengeful, and that his repentance is only self-love and fear. Esau repented with bitter cries ; but because it was only on the like motives, not for God, the Apostle assures us, " he found no place of repentance, although with tears he had sought it." Heb. xii. 17.

We have in holy writ another more terrible instance of the hypocrisy of a death-bed repentance in Antiochus, the illustrious, the wicked king of Syria, who had plundered the temple of the true God in Jerusalem, profaned the holy place, and persecuted God's servants. He was returning again to that city, resolved to make it a heap of stones ; but suddenly struck by God, he falls into a filthy distemper, consumed by worms and excessive pains, and sees himself surrounded with the terrors of death. He now becomes, in appearance, the most perfect penitent. He humbles himself before God, sheds floods of tears, resolves to make the greatest amends possible for his crimes, to declare Jerusalem a free city, and grant the Jews the highest privileges equal to those of the Athenians; to adorn the holy temple in a royal, magnificent manner, multiply its sacred vessels, and furnish all the expenses for sacrifices. He, moreover, promises to make himself a Jew, even to become an apostle of the true religion, and to walk over the whole earth to preach in person the power of God. Yet what does the Holy Ghost pronounce of this conversion, which would have canonized any sinner amongst men ? " The wicked man prayed the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy." 1 Mac. ix. 13. God saw his heart, and knew all this was only natural fear and self-love, or at least far short of the sincere disposition of true repentance. " It is only the impossibility of sinning, which makes such a one depart from his sins. He, who only leaves them at the sight of death, does not forsake them, but is forsaken by them," says Salvian of Marseilles, L. 1, p. 348.

3. Sincere repentance will appear extremely difficult, and a rare miracle of an extraordinary grace in a dying sinner, if we consider the great obstacles it has then to encounter. Headaches, pains, weakness both of body and mind, disturbance and uneasiness, grief at the separation from friends and the world with all its admired idols, which captivated the heart, and sometimes also the hurry to settle temporal affairs, render him almost incapable of anything. Ah! it is a great deal for even habitual, perfect virtue to maintain itself in such a case. The sinner's inveterate sloth to all spiritual things, and his being unacquainted with the method of forming the necessary acts of virtue, must be much increased under these difficulties. His old passions will still defend themselves obstinately in his heart, and even be stronger than ever, as he will be then more incapable of using that violence which is necessary to weaken them. It is a mistake to imagine that passions, rooted in the soul by long habits, die of themselves in sickness, or at the sight of death. They may lie dormant for want of power, but they hold the heart as strongly as ever. "His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust." Job xx. 11. Impiety, avarice, ambition, pride, will still live in his heart. Such as he has lived, such he remains in his sickness, and such he dies. "Their end shall be according to their works." 2 Cor. xi. 12. The rooting out of habitual passions, in the ordinary course of things, is not the work of one day, but requires a chain of vigorous endeavours; and such efforts, such earnest prayer, such violences, are not to be looked for commonly under a mortal sickness.

God forbid a death-bed repentance should be deemed impossible, and that any sinner brought so far should fall into despair. In that of the good thief on the cross, God has given sinners an example that no one need despair; but it is a single one, that no one might presume, says St. Augustin. And it is an example so singular in all its circumstances, that it can by no means refer to the sinner who has long resisted the calls of God, and deferred his conversion by a premeditated design. An extraordinary miracle of grace may be granted to a sinner who has not lived in a continual abuse of grace; but can it be expected to be the happy lot of him who has, by a formed plot, as it were, of cheating God's justice in the end, made use of his mercy to insult his goodness? His threats of abandoning presumptuous sinners must certainly regard such as these in the first place. "I go away, and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sins." John viii. 21. "Then they shall invoke me, and I will not hear them." Prov. i. 28.

If a true minister of God be called to assist such a dying sinner, what are his alarms, what is the confusion of his thoughts? The sinner may cry out to him, with king Saul to Samuel: "I am in mortal anguish, and am straitened exceedingly on every side. '*Coarctor nimis.*' Therefore I have called thee to show me what I must do in the extremity in which I find myself." 1 Reg. xxviii. 16. What answer would that faithful minister give him? Were he to speak his own just fears, might he not say, with Samuel: "Why hast thou disturbed me to come hither? Why dost thou ask me, seeing the Lord has departed from thee?"—"*Quare inquietasti me ut suscitarer? Quid interrogas me, cum Dominus recesserit a te?*" He dares not, indeed, put bounds to the infinite mercies and power of God. Therefore he suppresses his fears in his own breast, and performs all the duties of his ministry with all possible attention, but trembling lest

the last sacraments be sacrileges, and only the seals of that unfortunate soul's reprobation; rather adoring in his heart the judgments of God, "who is terrible in his counsels above the sons of men," Ps. lxv. 5, and "the power of whose choler no man knows," Ps. lxxxix. 11, than comforting himself in the hope of his mercies.

The sentiments of the fathers are delivered to us by the author of the book on penance long ascribed to St. Ambrose, but who was Victor, a pious and learned African prelate of the fifth age. Thus he writes, (L. de pœnit. c. 18, t. 4. Op. St. Ambr.) "If any one ask penance in his last sickness, and, being reconciled, departs this life, I own, we do not deny him what he desires, but I do not presume to say he departs well. I do not presume; I do not promise; I say nothing; I do not deceive or flatter you. The Christian that lives well dies secure. He who does penance whilst in health, and afterwards lives well, is secure. A man must renounce sin before penance, and whilst in health; he knows not whether in sickness he can receive penance, and confess his sins to God and the priest. But doing penance at the last and being reconciled, I am not secure that he departs secure. I can give him penance, but can give him no assurance. Do I say, he will be damned? No. But neither do I say he will be saved. Wouldst thou avoid what is uncertain? Do penance whilst thou art well. Then thou art secure, because thou couldst yet sin. But if thou dost penance, when thou canst not now sin, sins have forsaken thee, not thou them. Leave the uncertain, lay hold on the certain."

MEDITATION IX.

ON HUMAN RESPECT.

1. To be deterred from embracing Christian perfection for fear of what the world will say, is a crime most injurious to God. 2. Most base in itself. 3. And an extreme folly.

1. We owe, by the law of charity, a respect and regard to every neighbour, also a deference and complaisance in things indifferent, or in such as are good; but, then, we owe to God the supreme duty and homage, which no regard to creatures can ever authorize us to trespass against. Yet a desire to please men and gain their applause, or a fear of their raillery and displeasure often draws us into condescensions against our duty to God.

This is frequently a great obstacle, deterring souls from the practice of virtue. Every one has relations, friends, and a neighbourhood. This forms a world with regard to him, with which he finds himself linked by the various engagements of civil life. Upon the least change in his conduct, even in actions perfectly indifferent, or whether for better or worse, many set themselves up as judges and censors, and make his person the common subject of their discourse, ordinarily to condemn him of levity, indiscretion, pride, hypocrisy, or whatever their idle or malicious fancy suggests; and this especially in any change to piety which may seem a tacit reproach of their own tepidity or licentiousness. The fear of such censures often affrights people from daring to undertake a perfect conversion, or

embrace a state of true virtue; and this is one of the great and most successful engines which the devil employs to make many of our resolutions of serving God abortive, and also to draw many into sin.

Now, nothing can be more injurious to God than this base cowardice of human respect. For it puts in opposite scales the infinite majesty of God and a vile world, and in the heart, though not in words, says thus to God: I would serve you, but I cannot break with the world, nor bear its jeers and censures; I would please you, if I could do it without displeasing the world. Is not this positively to prefer the world, and the least and basest part of the world, to God, in choosing rather to offend him than lose the false suffrages and senseless esteem of men?

It is the first and most essential law of religion, that we pay to God a love of preference infinitely above all creatures, and this by all ways, speculatively, in actions and in the real sentiments of the soul. Only to put him in competition with created beings, would be an unparalleled affront. But here the basest, the most unjust, and most fickle of things is preferred to the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, to our infinite benefactor and last end.

Every faithful servant of God says with the Apostle, that neither death, nor things present, or to come, shall ever separate him from the love of Christ. But here a petty human respect, the fear of a few impotent, senseless, and impious tongues does what no tyrants or tortures, nor all the powers of the world or of hell, ought ever to effect.

A traitor, who, even to save his life, has betrayed his prince or country, is justly the abomination of all mankind, even of those whom he serves by his perfidy. Much more so must he be who renounces his allegiance to his God for the world, nay, for the most empty and frail thing in the world. We abhor the very names of those wretches who apostatize from their faith for fear of torments; but are ourselves guilty of a greater baseness, if we are ashamed of God for much less than gibbets and death. Our indignation, then, ought to be turned against ourselves. Can we call ourselves brothers, in faith, of the martyrs, or even look up towards those generous soldiers of Christ? We are afraid of a look, or of a passing word which we apprehend will be spoken behind our backs; whereas they professed boldly their faith in the cross of Christ, when nothing was considered as more ignominious. They trembled not in the presence of the lords of the universe threatening racks and fires; they feared not their displeasure nor that of whole kingdoms; they spilt their blood amidst the insults of their friends and the hissings of whole amphitheatres. All this ignominy of the world was their glory in the secrets of their hearts, because for Christ.

If we are not called to so great a trial from the world as the martyrs, we have all of us something to suffer from this sworn enemy of God's service. Never was one converted to God, who had not some threats of the world to despise. Had Magdalene feared the scorn of the Pharisee's assembly, she had never been a saint; nor David a penitent, if he had dreaded that of his whole kingdom. Of which he says: "I put on sackcloth, and was become the fable of the whole city. I was the subject of the discourses and satires at every table." Ps. lxviii. 12, 13. "But I prayed to you, O Lord." Not regarding the tongues of men, I was only solicitous to obtain your mercy.

2. But cowardly Christians sometimes invent a salvo. They say they

will pray, fast, and practise virtue in private, and only exteriorly conform to the world, to escape its ridicule. In this they condemn themselves, for is God and his service an object to be ashamed of before the world? Is not he to be confessed and honoured publicly? Most certainly he is, as the very light of nature itself proclaims. We owe this to our neighbour's edification; we owe it to the sovereign honour of God, whose holy name and service we are always openly to profess, glory in, and to carry on our foreheads.

Christ will be ashamed of those before his heavenly Father, who are ashamed of him before men. Luke ix. 25. What a confusion will it be to a soul at the last day, and for eternity, to see her base human respect represented in its true colours before God, whom she so pusillanimously was ashamed of, before Christ in his glory, all the angels and heavenly courts, and all men and devils? What railleries and insults will she then receive from all creatures, even from those whom here she preferred to her God? What intolerable shame will she be overwhelmed with, not able for one moment to hide her ignominious head? How will she herself blush at, and not be able to look in the face, nor yet to turn her eyes from, her most preposterous unjust shame of what is the highest object of all glory!

How can you hope to satisfy those, whose very composition is malice, who are never content with themselves, and who for the most part know not what they themselves would have? These are men who are enemies to reason and virtue, who will find something to condemn in all that you can do; and who, if you were to work miracles, would say they were impostures or enchantments, and call you a false and designing man. If you are prudent and weigh well your actions and words, how can you please those who are foolish, light, and indiscreet, and condemn before they understand? It is the misfortune of the wise, that they are judged by the foolish, or ignorant, and base, and who condemn whatever they do not understand at first sight. The world is full of foolish or envious persons. What will you do to please the latter, whose envy passes for zeal, and to whom passion seems reason, which it banishes?

This human respect is not only most injurious to God, but also a sentiment most base in itself. For what is this censure it so much dreads? What is this world, which it so much fears to displease? It consists of a few libertines, a fickle mob that judges without knowledge, reason, truth, or virtue; and without any power to hurt us; without authority, right, or justice. The world is so inconstant in its censures or applauses, that often on the same point it changes as suddenly as the wind, and highly commends what it justly before condemned; of which the life of our Saviour on earth was a perpetual example. Its judgment even in temporal things is ever so uncertain, that they who most court it are often the most severely condemned by it, even in what they sought its approbation of; as the heathens have taught us, by their fable of the man and his ass. It generally pronounces falsely, and against the rules of virtue and reason, and always rashly without sufficient knowledge, by passion, whim, and caprice; out of pride, or to follow the torrent, especially when it censures virtue, as in this case it is exasperated on seeing its own vices condemned by the example of one who embraces a more regular conduct; which it therefore condemns in words, not to be obliged to imitate it; though, at the same time, even they, who thus decry and ridicule it by their tongues, usually admire and envy it in their hearts. For such is the beauty, amia-

bleness, and honour of virtue, that even the wicked cannot but highly esteem it, and acknowledge it as something greater than crowns and sceptres, and far above the world; their fury against it seldom lasts long. Their malice and injustice are ordinarily overcome by its meekness and constancy; and, by being contemned by it, even its enemies at last become its open applauders. They often will think it a happiness to treat with these persons, and find not more solid consolation than in their probity, prudence, and fidelity; nor any secure shelter in their fears and necessities, but in having recourse to them. Hence the Wise Man says of virtue, Sap. viii. 10: "I shall have glory with the multitude, and honour with princes; I shall appear wonderful in the sight of the powerful; and shall leave an eternal memory to those, that shall be after me." Such is this formidable enemy; nay, it often is a mere phantom, subsisting only in the affrighted imagination of these timorous souls, and has no existence.

Besides, this world has no power by its censure to hurt any servant of God, nor right to judge him. Ah! what can the cries of all the world do against us? We are like fearful beasts, that start at shadows. Suppose the worst that men can do, if we but please God, what need we mind their false judgment? If God justifies us, it matters not who condemns us: if God be with us, it is of no moment who are against us. Let us fear his sentence, which is truth, and which is to decide our eternal lot; but as to men, let us never so much as consider what their verdict or opinion of our actions is, which is much less dangerous to us, if it condemn than if it applaud them. Let then the world cry, it can only disturb the birds of the night, that fear its phantoms; but cannot touch or scare one, who is, in earnest, desirous to become a servant of God. "I regard not the being judged by you, or by man's day." 1 Cor. iv. 3.

Again, as the world has no right to judge, it is a base slavery to subject the conduct of our lives to its extravagant caprice, even in ordinary actions and indifferent things. To regulate ourselves by its unsteady and false rule in anything whatsoever is abominable. But it is most of all so to enslave to it our conscience and virtue, which, above all things, ought to be most free. To serve others in their temporal necessities and concerns, according to our circumstances and station in the world, is a point of charity, and sometimes of strict duty. But to subject ourselves to others, and bind ourselves to serve them in things essentially free, and which we owe to ourselves or others, and this out of fear of them, is a baseness not to be expressed. Our bodies indeed we may subject to others in bondage, if necessity require it: though a man born free, and of valour and spirit, would defend his corporal liberty with his life, rather than sell it for an unjust slavery. But our soul is above all things essentially free, and particularly so in the indispensable duties of religion, in the service of God, in the affair of eternity. In this, the dignity of our nature and our allegiance to God, forbid us ever to become slaves. As we owe this to God, to ourselves, and to the edification of every neighbour, it would be the greatest injustice, as well as the most shameful baseness, to enslave ourselves to a weak, inconstant, foolish world; nay, to a frown or a word of one of its most contemptible members, as human respect doth. In everything else we serve you, said the Hebrews to king Pharaoh, when his slaves in Egypt; but we must be free to go into the wilderness to sacrifice to the God of Israel.

What are the noble sentiments, which nature engrafts in our hearts, and which religion infinitely raises and enhances, in this particular? How do we admire them in the saints! who, on one side, always boldly professed by their conduct, that they knew no other glory than what is placed in the service of God, and regarded it as the greatest mark of honour, to suffer ignominy amongst men for it: while, on the other side, they scorned and pitied a wicked blind world. When faith in a God crucified was looked upon as a scandal and a folly, both by Jews and Gentiles, and by all the great and wise ones of the world, St. Paul cried out, with a true generosity, in their fullest assemblies, and before their tribunals: "I blush not at the Gospel." Rom. i. When all Israel adored the golden calves of Jeroboam, how did Tobias go constantly alone to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord? Consider Eleazar, the Maccabees, Susanna, St. Thomas of Canterbury, all the saints and holy martyrs, how they generously despised threats, disgrace, and the most ignominious persecutions. On the contrary, full of evangelical courage and liberty, they even regarded the railleries and censures of the world as their gain and their glory, and justly scorned them. In temporal things and of the world, nothing is more glorious than to despise an unjust and foolish contempt. But raillery never is more frivolous, never more deserves contempt, than when it attacks virtue and the honour of God. For us, therefore, not to have the courage to despise it, in what we ourselves judge it most deserves to be despised, and to sacrifice to it the very duties of our religion, our souls, and the service of God, is a pusillanimity so base, that it is impossible to find a name for it. We can certainly no more boast of a greatness of soul, if we once voluntarily pass under so shameful a yoke.

This baseness is so much the greater, because it implies the most notorious injustice against God, as well as against ourselves. For God is the judge of our souls; and shall we have any true courage, if we dare not defend the interests of our God, and maintain what we owe him, especially against his declared enemy, and an antagonist the most despicable and impotent? Remember, my soul, I am not my own master, much less am I the world's. I have the honour to belong to God by all manner of titles; and I am inalienably his, and raised to a most eminent dignity in his family. I am his creature, formed by his hands, enriched with his gifts, redeemed by his blood, heir of his glory, and, as a Christian, engaged by a solemn profession to fight his battles. Shall I yet, instead of arming myself with courage and defending his cause, abandon and betray him for a false and base world; which conduct would be unpardonable even in a mercenary?

As a Christian, I am particularly obliged to despise the world. This I bound myself to by my baptismal vows, in which I solemnly renounced it. This the example of my divine Master ought to encourage me to. He himself was hated and censured by the world, and thus foretold to all his followers the like portion: "If the world hates you, know that it hated me first." John xv. 18.

3. This most base cowardice is likewise an extravagant folly. To call the judgment of others false and mad, and yet to pay a deference to it, so far as for it to be afraid of professing virtue, must be still a greater phrensy, and a more unaccountable contradiction to sense and reason. Would a wise man, if he were in the midst of sick or mad people, be ashamed of being in health or in his senses? If the world call us fools, we will answer that

it is mad; and we have truth itself, God, and all his servants on our side, when we say so. This folly will appear more notorious, if we consider that this world is not only a bedlam in its judgment on virtue, but also a *Babel*, in which every one speaks a different language, and every one changes his judgment more easily, than the wind veers about from one point of the compass to another, usually grounding it on passion or prejudice. Hence the proverb, "He who would please everybody, will please nobody."

No prudent man will ever commit an affair of importance, even in temporal concerns, to a mob. It is a just thought of a great wit, that it is a commendation to be that which a crowd of fools call singular. There can hardly be a more severe thing said to a man in this age, than that he is like the rest of the world. What strange extravagance then must it be, to value such a judgment in the service of God, as to which, above all things, the world is the most incompetent and unqualified court?

The folly of human respect appears more extraordinary, if we reflect, that every Christian knows the world to be the declared enemy of God, and of our souls; which has declared war against us as we have against it. Virtue must ever displease it. Who then can regard its censure? Doth any one ask or follow the advice of an enemy?

The world's censure is a great sign of Christ's approbation. A virtue applauded by it, is justly to be suspected as not true, nor the work of God. Its praises of our generosity, courtesy, or humility, give reason to apprehend they were but human and false virtues; or, at least, expose us to the danger of losing their reward by a mixture of human motives creeping into them. The humiliation of its frowns purifies our heart and intention, and secures us the applause of heaven. "If I please men, I should not be a servant of Christ," says the Apostle, Gal. i. 10. And Christ has forewarned us: "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." John xv. 20. Thus our divine Master himself was treated by it. He tells us, that if he had been of this world, it would have fought for him; but, that as he came to declare war against it, in return it became his persecutor. Thus it is of all his true followers, as their lives are the condemnation of its vanity and corruption. It ought then to be our glory and our joy, to find it declare itself our persecutor; and to court its approbation is a folly, and a contradiction to the principles of our religion. It was thus the saints looked upon it: and this raised them above the dangers both of its vain displeasure, and its false praises. St. Paulinus, a noble Roman senator, having renounced his dignity, honours, and estate for Christ, leading an obscure austere life in solitude and extreme poverty, sometimes not having so much as a little salt to his pulse, rejoiced to hear the world bark at him, and all his own relations and friends conspire to tear him in pieces, and accuse his very retreat of melancholy, and of a thousand sinister and false motives. His answer to all their calumnies and satires was: "It is an happy injury to displease you with Christ."—"*O beata injuria, displicere cum Christo.*" Ep. 29. As he was himself a great scholar in every branch of polite literature, and an excellent poet, his old master, the famous poet Ausonius, regretted extremely his loss in the world; and in verses and letters yet extant, entirely in a worldly spirit, accused him, in the bitterest terms, of inexcusable madness and extravagance. The saint in his mild and beautiful answer, in elegant verse, tells him, it was his desire and pleasure to be persecuted, reviled, and calumniated even by his friends; that all reproaches for Christ were most agreeable to him, and

that he mattered not to pass for a fool in the judgment of men or the world, provided he could gain the approbation of his eternal King.

> "Christi sub nomine probra placebunt."—CARM. 10, v. 186.
>
> "Stultus diversa requirentibus esse
> Nil moror, æterno mea dum sententia Regi
> Sit sapiens."—CARM. 10, v. 265.

But even the world at length opened its eyes, and this saint's virtue became its admiration. His reputation drew men from the very corner of the empire, only to see and converse with him in his poor cottage or cell, as St. Augustin and St. Jerom witness.

If any one should say, it is not the censure of the giddy mob, but that of persons of honour and virtue, or of worthy friends or parents which I fear, let him reflect, that even this is no less despicable, if it oppose the interests of virtue. If they are really persons of great virtue and prudence, they will the sooner open their eyes, and condemn their own unreasonable invectives. In the meantime, let St. Jerom be heard; he writes thus to Heliodorus, who was detained by his parents and family from engaging in a monastic life in the desert, p. 6. t. 4. par. 2: "Though your father hang on your neck—though your mother show you her breasts, with her hair dishevelled and her garments rent—though your father throw himself across the threshold, walk over your father; fly with dry eyes to the standard of the cross. It is piety to be cruel in this." Elias, a novice under St. Bernard, to whose monastery he had fled from his parents, when they would force him out of the severe retreat he had just taken refuge in, writes to them in these words dictated by his master, St. Bernard: "In this, I am not to obey you—in this, I do not own you parents, but enemies. If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I go to your and my common Father, the parent of all. 'If any one come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, he cannot be my disciple,' says Christ. Luke xiv. 26." St. Bernard, ep. iii. p. 119.

It must be added, that this cursed human respect is again the more criminal, base, and foolish, as, upon the most empty phantom, it makes all the means of salvation fruitless. This hindered the conversion of many at the preaching of our divine Redeemer: "Many of the chief men also believed in him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him. For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God." John xii. 42, 43. And thousands still continually are lost by the same stratagem. If a sinner be moved, if he form good resolutions, this base, senseless shame makes all abortive. He is afraid of putting them in execution—is afraid that a greater regularity may appear in his manners, and he become the talk of the world, which is without mercy to all who forsake it. Even at death, this fear of men will still sway him; he is even then afraid of repentance, of restitution for injustice, calumnies, and detractions, of reparation for injuries and contumelies. He loves the glory of men. We live indeed in an age, in which the profession of the gospel is honourable; otherwise, would such souls embrace even faith itself? Ah! "I am saved, if I am not ashamed of my God," cries out Tertullian.—"*Salvus sum, si non confundar de Domino meo.*" O cursed, foolish, base, and impious shame, how many souls dost thou hold in infidelity, heresy, and error? How many, called by God to a state of perfection, or to an eminent practice of virtue, dost thou keep back and ruin? How many precious graces

dost thou destroy, and convert into judgments? Ah! my soul, whenever the interest of God or virtue calls, never be so base as to listen to the world or to a shameful fear of what it will say. This triumph over it will be a new subject of joy and glory, and an additional victory and crown; a second just agreeable sacrifice to thy God, whose will thou thus declarest that thou lovest and seekest as thy only good. Never so far forget him as to raise imaginary fears in thyself about what men will say of thee. When they do really censure thee, rejoice thereat, hoping thou art then made a true disciple of thy divine Master. Seek only the approbation of God, and glory from him at the last day, which will be holy, solid, great, and eternal in the eyes of the whole universe. But it will be glorious, even before men, to despise the world, and to triumph over it for the sake of virtue; rather to lose our lives, than to be guilty of the least known untruth.

MEDITATION X.

ON VENIAL SIN.

To obtain a complete sense of the enormity of venial sin, let us first examine the judgment which Almighty God appears to pass upon it; secondly, its pernicious effects upon the soul.

1. Let us consider whether God regards venial sin as a small evil. His judgment of it cannot be false, as he is justice, equity, and truth. He shows it to be a most enormous evil, seeing he punishes it with a terrible severity in his greatest friends and servants. Moses, that man of meekness, and frequently a model of all other virtues, above all men on earth; that man of miracles, appointed by heaven the God of Pharaoh, that is, invested with the power and authority of God over that haughty king; the greatest of the prophets, God's immediate ambassador both to his enemies and to his own people, and his interpreter, by whose mouth he was pleased to give his law, and promulgate his greatest promises to men; that man again, who had undergone so many labours and dangers, and suffered so many contradictions and trials for God's honour and for his people; I say, that eminent saint and great lawgiver, after all was excluded from the land of promise, in punishment of one venial sin. That he might see his people put in possession of that fruitful land, flowing with milk and honey, promised long before by God to Abraham, had been the object of his longing wishes, fatigues, projects, battles, and earnest prayers, during forty years, all spent under the greatest hardships for that purpose. Yet God denies him that favour, and declares to him and Aaron: "Because you did not believe me to sanctify me before the children of Israel, you shall not lead these people into the land, which I give unto them." Num. xx. 12. This distrust, for which God reproves him, seems to have been a doubt of a moment, whether he could work the miracle of producing a spring out of the rock, at his striking it, in favour of so rebellious and disobedient a people, as St. Austin, qu. 19, in Num.; St. Chrysostom, in Ps. 105; Theodoret, in Num. 20, &c., gather from the text. Moses prayed most earnestly, that God would forgive him that offence, and remit the punishment mentioned, as the mercy was a favour most dear to his heart. Yet, the Almighty would not be moved to miti-

gate his sentence, either by his fears, or for the sake of his past labours and virtues. "Lord God," said Moses to him, "I will pass and see this very good land, and that rich mountain. And the Lord was angry with me on your account, and did not hear me, and said, Thou shall not pass that Jordan." Deut. iii. 24. 95.

Oza seeing the holy ark, as it was drawn by the cattle, lean on one side, touched it with his hand, to support it, for which he was suddenly struck dead, 2 Kings vi. 7; because it was, out of reverence, forbidden for any, except the priests, to touch it; though, according to Josephus, Oza himself was a Levite, not a simple layman. King David, in punishment of a little vanity and curiosity in numbering his people, saw 70,000 of them swept off by a pestilence. 2 Kings xxiv. 15. Lot's wife was, upon the spot, turned into a pillar of salt for looking back to see Sodom, her country, in flames. Gen. xix. 16. The holy king Ezechias showed his treasures with a little vanity to the ambassadors of Baladan, the king of Babylon, and straight the prophet Isaias came to denounce to him from God, that, in punishment thereof, all these riches should be carried away into Babylon, his nobles and people led captives, and his sons made eunuchs and slaves in the king of Babylon's palace. 4 Kings xx. 17; Isa. xxxix. We read in the third book of Kings, ch. xiii., that a certain prophet was sent by God to Bethel, in Samaria, to curse king Jeroboam's idolatrous altar. He boldly exposed himself to martyrdom, and executed his commission; and when Jeroboam's hand, which he had stretched out to command him to be apprehended, was withered, he restored it again by a miracle. Having refused to eat with that king, or receive any present from him, and obeyed God's orders in everything, to the danger of his life, returning home, he was deceived by a false prophet into a small, undesigned transgression, in being prevailed upon to eat with him. In punishment of this, he was killed by a lion on his road; yet the beast touched not his body, but stood by and guarded it. God would thus chastise his sin, to deter others from the smallest offences; but caused the lion to guard his corpse, to show us that his sin was venial, and expiated by his death, as is observed by the fathers and interpreters. St. Augustin, l. de cura pro mort. c. 7; St. Gregory the Great, dial. l. 4, c. 24; Theodoret, St. Eucherius, &c.

But why do we seek such remote examples of the severity with which God punishes venial sin, seeing we might discover it in the miseries we ourselves suffer did we behold the causes of them all? When we groan under them, how bitter are our tears and complaints? What would not we give to remove them? Alas! we should do better to learn in them the malice of sin, to consider their cause only, mount up to their source, and to repent of and avoid all sin; for the most heavy temporal afflictions may be the just punishment only of venial sin.

But the punishments of sin in this life are light, and inflicted in mercy, that, being borne and sanctified by patience, they may expiate our sins at a cheaper rate, and prevent the heavier pains of purgatory. Could our eyes penetrate into those dungeons, we should there truly see how grievous an evil one venial sin is, which deserves such intolerable torments. We should there see souls which had lived faithful to God, and had done and suffered much, very much for his honour—souls even now adorned with his sanctifying graces, and all the other gifts and privileges of his infinite love; souls even now loving him above all things, and accepting these his scourges with patience, resignation, and love, both of him and of his strict justice;

reciprocally also loved infinitely by him as his most dear spouses, children, and declared heirs, yet suffering more than knives or fires could effect, or the most inhuman tyrants invent—more than any tongue can express or heart conceive; and all this only for one venial sin. Oh! how grievous an evil must it be! God shuts heaven's gates against his dearest and most faithful servants, if infected in the least with it, and inflicts on them the most severe punishment. "That fire, though not eternal, is wonderfully grievous, and exceeds all pains which any ever suffered in this life," says St. Austin, l. de cur. pro mort. c. 8; and St. Cæsarius, hom. 8: "It is greater than any pain in this world can be felt or imagined."

2. We shall farther discover the evil of venial sin, if we consider its most pernicious effects; for it deprives a soul of very great good, and of many advantages, causes her much mischief, and leads her still into more terrible evils. First, it robs her of much good; for, as it defiles her spiritual beauty, it makes her less agreeable to God, and renders all her actions and virtues less pleasing in his sight. "As anything that is touched by one defiled will be itself defiled, so that people before my face, says the Lord, and so all the work of their hands, and all things which they have offered there, shall be defiled." Aggæus xi. 15. Also, as venial sin darkens the purity and cleanness of the soul, it disturbs and diminishes her inward happiness, peace, and tranquillity. Again, it is an obstacle to the consolations and other gifts of the Holy Ghost, who, often for venial sin, leaves a soul dry in prayer; without sentiment in the divine praises, and in approaching the sacraments—without compunction in the meditation of spiritual truths—without any relish of heavenly consolation. The divine Spirit, seeing the heart tainted with sin, withdraws his special gifts. "Our sins cause the separation between us and God." Isa. lix. 2.

Venial sins likewise retard the soul's progress to perfection. They are as so many clouds between the soul and the divine light, which can only enter a soul in proportion as she is more empty and free from them. Whence the spouse always repeats, with deep sentiments of compunction, Cant. xi. 15: "Catch for us the little foxes, which destroy the vineyards; for our vineyard is blossomed." Our soul has flowered with holy desires; already some buds and fruit appear, and give hopes of a plentiful vintage. Let us destroy the little foxes, which will otherwise ruin it, and blast all our rising hopes.

Venial sin deprives a soul of God's extraordinary graces, and very much diminishes his ordinary ones. He is liberal in the effusion of his graces, but to those only who bring faithful and generous hearts. Any infidelity shuts his bountiful hand, and nothing so much invites his goodness as an exact fidelity. This is truly the work of perfect love, to be faithful in the minutest points. "What is little is little; but it is very great to be faithful in the least things," says St. Aug. l. de doctr. Christ. c. 18. Thus the evil deprives a soul of much good.

Venial sin also brings great detriment and mischief to a soul. Though it destroys not habitual charity entirely in her, yet it impairs it. Did we know, as the blessed, or as the souls in purgatory now do, how incomparably precious, how inestimable every degree of sanctifying grace is, we should look upon the least loss or diminution in it as an extreme evil. Again, venial sin is an indisposition and a wound of the soul, though not such as to cause immediate death. Do we reason thus of the body? It is but a passing curable illness; so not to be avoided. It is but a wound in an arm or

leg; it is but the loss of a hand or an eye, and will not be the cause of my death. Or, is not a spiritual wound of the soul much more to be dreaded than any in the body, or even its death many times over? St. Teresa inculcated this most earnestly. She writes thus to her dear nuns, l. de concept. divin. am. c. 2: "Take notice of one thing, and always remember it for my sake. If you are pricked but with a pin, will you not feel it? or with a thorn, though it be never so small? Will not, then, the soul feel the least transgression?"

Especially if these transgressions be multiplied, they strangely weaken and disfigure the poor soul, covering her all over with heaps of sores, ulcers, and hideous deformities. Hence St. Cæsarius, hom. 50, inter op. S. Aug.: "Though they do not give mortal wounds, like murder, yet all united together, as an universal spreading sore, so disfigure the beauty of the spouse as to separate her from the chaste embraces of her heavenly bridegroom, who is spotless and beautiful above the sons of men, unless they be cut off and healed by daily penance." We must also observe with St. Gregory Nazianzen, Serm. 7: "That, if the spots upon richer and more shining garments appear worse, those which defile a spiritual soul, beautified by God, must be most ugly and terrible." Add, that the more filthy the ordure is, the nastier and worse will the stain be. But nothing can be more so than base earthly affections upon an incorporeal soul.

Venial sins, moreover, like little wounds, weaken the soul, and are a burden, hindering her from rising to heavenly things, making her heavy, tepid, and slothful to virtue or good works. They are so many clouds obscuring the light of spiritual truths—so many loads weighing her down from soaring high towards God—so many chains binding the hands, and impeding the free practice of good works. The motion of a clock is often stopped by a little dust in one wheel. A little bird-lime will clog the wings of a bird, or one small thread of a net hamper it, so that it will fall a prey to the fowler.

Again, every venial sin retards a soul from the possession of heaven after death. It is a debt which must be paid to the last farthing. By multiplying such transgressions, how do we increase the enormous schedule of our debts to God, which must be all paid, and the divine justice entirely satisfied! God puts down all in his great accounting book. He keeps an exact register of all our distractions, idle looks, vain desires, unprofitable thoughts or words; of all our least omissions, neglects, and infidelities.

If venial sin be terrible, on account of the evils it causes, it is far more so if we consider those much greater ones to which it leads a soul. It disposes to mortal sin, and, what is worse, to a state of slothfulness and insensibility under it; and this many ways. On one side, it weakens charity, the spiritual life of the soul, and impairs her strength, just as little repeated corporal sicknesses long hanging on do that of the body. It deprives her, also, of God's special protection, by which he wards off dangers, or grants extraordinary succours under them. It makes the succours of his actual graces more sparing; for those he bestows in proportion to our good use of them, and withdraws them in punishment of the least infidelities. On the other side, it fills the heart daily more and more with creatures, and fetters it with earthly attachments; it strengthens concupiscence and self-love, together with the whole brood of its passions, which, by insensible degrees, grow furious and masterless. Hence the law of God seems a painful yoke, and the unction of the Holy Ghost is banished. In this situation, the

spiritual life of the soul must be very languishing, and can never support itself long. Still the wounds are repeated, till it be quite lost. As the carpenter's repeated blows drive in the wedge farther every time till the block is at last split; as a little chink neglected will sink the largest vessel; as a spark undiscovered, and not put out, will raise a dreadful fire; as one drop of blood in a human body extravasated in the lungs, and not expectorated, will ulcerate the organ, and at last cause death; so, in the spiritual life, venial sin multiplied, and not wiped away, leads to the most fatal death. All the greatest falls have small beginnings. No man becomes very wicked on a sudden. Lesser commencements pave the road first; and the greater these have been, the more desperate is the precipice to which they lead.

Not only grace is withdrawn, and the passions strengthened; but also the supports and pillars of a virtuous life are ruined by reiterated venial sins. How then can it stand? The strongest edifice must fall, if its pillars are taken away. The commonwealth subsists by its laws. These are the supports of its discipline, peace, and good order; and if they fall into contempt, or begin to be trampled upon, the state must sink, and become a company of highwaymen, and a Babel of lawless confusion. Hence, Aristotle observes, (Politic. l. 5,) that the first thing to make a republic flourish, and long mantain itself is, that its laws be exactly observed. The rules or constitutions are the same to a religious house. A facility of transgressing the smaller rules is apt to creep in, under various pretences; and this, if it once gets footing, is sure very soon to ruin the best discipline and most flourishing house, and become the bane of all good in it. Therefore, every well governed monastery is extremely solicitous, that none of its rules be contemned or habitually neglected, be they ever so small or seemingly trivial. Good purposes and the exercise of virtue are, in the same manner, the means by which piety maintains itself. If relaxation be once admitted, it will infallibly gain apace, and the fabric soon fall. Nothing, then, is more important than to avoid all habitual transgressions of the smallest duties; for they sap the very foundations of a virtuous life, as small extravagant expenses, if daily multiplied, will ruin any estate. The Holy Ghost, therefore, gives this advice: "Keep the law as the apple of thy eye." Prov. vii. 2. How severely is military discipline observed in an army? The necessity is still greater in our spiritual warfare.

But what need of reasonings, or of appealing to universal experience, to evince what the oracle of truth itself expressly declares in these words, Eccl. xix. 1: "He who contemns small things, falls by degrees." St. Austin compares venial sins to small venomous insects, which, though they do not kill by one bite, as the lion, yet by their multitudes, are as effectually mortal in the end. L. de 10 cordis, c. 11. And in his twelfth tract on St. John, n. 14. p. 390, he writes thus: "Many little sins, if they are neglected, kill. The drops of water, which fill rivers, are small; grains of sand are also small; yet, if much sand be laid on a ship, it sinks it; and if water, entering by little, be not pumped out, it is no less sure to drown the vessel, than the greatest waves falling upon her. It matters not whether she perish all at once, by one great wave or by degrees, by springing a leak unperceived, or by water entering drop by drop through an imperceptible chink; the wreck is neither less sure, nor less fatal. This doctrine is not to be understood, as if venal sins, ever so much multiplied, can

amount to the guilt of mortal sin. What then is here meant is, that venial sin, if neglected, certainly leads to mortal, and even to the most dangerous state of mortal sin.

A neglect of venial sin disposes to mortal two ways, directly and indirectly. Directly; first, because it often happens, that a considerable matter in the same line will be mortal. In such cases it is evident, that an habit of smaller transgressions leads to greater; as if one be accustomed to use rash words, to commit little frauds, tell inconsiderable lies, be negligent a little in his devotions or other duties to God, or the like; if this be with attachment, or habitual and affected, it will by degrees carry him beyond the bounds of venial sin, because they, of their own nature, draw a soul farther and farther, and at the same time both blind her, and with a violence natural to all habits attract her. Secondly, the just bounds of mortal and venial sins are generally uncertain to us, and cannot be fixed by men, or determined by any human judgment or learning, as God has nowhere revealed them to us; whereas such a knowledge is noways necessary for us, seeing all sin is to be avoided with the utmost diligence. Hence St. Augustin, speaking of the distinction of mortal and venial sin, says, L. 21. de liv. c. 27: "It is a point most difficult to find, and most dangerous to determine."—"*Difficillimum est invenire, et periculosissimum definire.*" He adds: "I have made great search, but have not been able to find any certainty; and perhaps God has, on that very account, concealed them, lest our solicitude in avoiding all sin should grow remiss; because, if men knew such limits, their sloth might lie secure, whereas, the bounds of venial sin not being known, we have a great spur to be always fervent and watchful." St. Thomas also observes: "It is too dangerous for us to determine what is not mortal sin, unless the truth be evident in God's word." Quodlib. 9, art. 15.

We must thirdly observe, that men ordinarily fall short of their resolutions. The very best do not perfectly reach their aim. How much more will the slothful, and they who propose to avoid only mortal sin, exceed these bounds?

Fourthly, such are always blinded by their passions, and consequently are, of all men, the least able to fix these bounds between mortal sin and venial sin. Custom, example, and false maxims of the world, make men often look on great crimes as small. Self-love, especially in the tepid, is still a greater bias, strongly actuates the will, and disfigures the truth. Our sins, on this account, seem to us not great, because by self-love shutting our eyes, we flatter ourselves in our own deceit, says St. Gregory the Great, L. 1, in Ezech.

But though the object can only be a venial sin, it will be made mortal, if our hearts (whose dispositions we can never sound) are so bent on it, that we should commit it, though it were mortal. The sovereign love of God is gradually weakened by venial sin, and at last will be extinguished in the heart, whilst an attachment to creatures, growing continually stronger, at last gains the ascendant, and becomes predominant in it. Thus every habitual venial sin disposes directly to mortal, as St. Thomas observes, several ways. The soul through it slides into the precipice, often without being conscious to herself of her fall; or at last being led to the brink, abandoned by God, hurried on by the violence of impetuous passions, she knowingly takes the fatal step.

As for a design, in venial sin, of venturing to the bounds of mortal,

or a resolution of laying aside all solicitude of avoiding any sin which is not mortal; either of these dispositions is, in itself, an actual mortal sin, as it is an immediate occasion of it. "He who loves danger, shall perish in it."

Venial sin always disposes to mortal sin indirectly, as it impairs charity daily more and more, makes graces more sparing and weaker, destroys fervour, roots up good dispositions, strengthens the passions, and opens the heart to receive the poison. And such a state of venial sin is the more desperate, as in it the strength of the soul has been gradually enervated, and she is reduced to it by an universal spiritual decay. Corporal distempers are much more dangerous and harder to be cured, when they proceed from a decay, and are the effect of long languor and waste; for powers, spirits, or organs, spent and exhausted, cannot be repaired again, whereas disorders from a plethora or redundancy are easily removed by evacuations. So it happens in the disorders of the soul. Hence St. Gregory the Great says, Pastor. Admon. 34: "Sometimes it is worse to sin in a small thing than in a greater." And St. Chrysostom, Hom. 8, in Matt.: "Sometimes small sins seem to me to require more care to be avoided than the more grievous; for these, of their own nature, stir up our attention against them, whereas the others are more easily despised." Nothing is destroyed all at once. A great fall proceeds from little things every where, but especially in a spiritual life. Whence St. Chrysostom says again, Hom. 8, in 1 Cor.: "He who strays a little, will go far very fast. A little is not little; it is all." Souls do not fall at once. The devil never proposes enormous sins at first. Their sight affrights, as they are monsters of horror, bringing with them the guilt of hell. He finds access more easily by venial sins, which, becoming habitual, lead to mortal insensibly. "He who is unfaithful in little, is unfaithful also in much." Luke xvi. 10. For, as St. Augustin observes, Enchir. c. 78: "What sins are light, what grievous, is to be weighed by the judgment of God, not of men: for, who would have believed him guilty of hell-fire, who calls his brother fool, if truth itself had not said it?" He moreover takes notice, that men judge under the blinds of false prejudices, of passions, and of the world, and its maxims and customs. Enchir. c. 80: "Sins ever so great and horrible, when once they are come into custom, are believed small, or sometimes none at all." The most common and highest venial sins directly lead the soul to mortal, which are as seldom perceived or thought on, as the danger was. Thus talkativeness leads naturally to detraction, slander, and a hundred excesses, in which the malice may be mortal, yet entirely unperceived. Too great a familiarity, even of persons of the same sexes, leads into sensual fondnesses, or criminal flatteries and condescensions: curiosity draws into dissipation, hardness of heart, and innumerable evils; a little vanity into open pride or ambition; and so on in all other habitual venial sins. On the contrary, he who fears an idle word, will never fall into detraction, &c.—as he who is careful not to throw away a shilling superfluously, is in no danger of squandering his estate.

MEDITATION XI.

ON VENIAL SINS OF SURPRISE.

1. THE distinction between venial sins of malice and of surprise is very great.

2. No one is exempt from sin.

3. On the means, by which daily venial sins are repaired.

1. Infinite is the difference between venial sins of malice, that is, those which are committed knowingly, and with a positive deliberate malice and full choice, and such sins of surprise, which men fall into, through human frailty, for want of sufficient compunction, from which even the saints are not totally exempt, who would not, for a thousand worlds, consent knowingly to the least offence against God. The latter are neither so grievous, nor so pernicious. Hence the Holy Ghost says; not he who falls into small faults, but, "he who despises small things, falls by degrees." Eccl. xix. 8. For he, who neglects or contemns them, commits them with a perfect knowledge, and a deliberate malice, never rises from them, but lives in an habitual impenitence of them, so that his wounds are deep, permanent, and incurable, and multiplied one upon another. Such a disposition and state is most hateful to God, and most pernicious in its consequences. Upon which St. Bernard writes thus, L. de præc. et disp. c. 11: "The obstinacy of an impenitent heart makes even the least faults exceedingly grievous, and turns a small simple transgression into a crime of heinous rebellion." And St. Chrysostom, Hom. 8, in 1 Cor: "Let us not neglect any sloth as small: for neglected, it will grow immense. A little rent in a garment, if neglected, will destroy the whole coat; and the house will fall, from a few stones failing, and not repaired." Have not I been guilty of this insensibility?

Venial sins of surprise and frailty are of a very different nature. They are such as the servants of God fall into, though they study daily to be more watchful against them, and labour in a perpetual spirit of penance, to wash away their stains as soon as contracted. Such are light distractions in spiritual duties, through the inconstancy and weakness of human minds, anxiety in duties or affairs, too great levity in hearing others' faults, too great harshness, severity, or frowardness in zeal, precipitation, or a little sloth in actions, small unperceived motions of self-love, sensuality, vanity, self-will, or the like—secret passions, superfluous words, want of a sufficient guard over any of the senses, or any motives of the heart, &c. Any deliberate action, word, thought, or affection, which is not virtually referred to the holy will of God, and corresponds not with it, or is tainted with any such circumstance from self-love, is an offence against God. Simple imperfections indeed are not sins, but only a want of a greater perfection; yet they are frequently sinful on account of some sloth or other passion being the occasion of them. And it is impossible often for men to determine what is a venial sin, and what a mere imperfection; or to discern all the movements of their own heart, or what is their real principle.

In proportion as a soul advances in virtue, her light of grace increases; and as it becomes purer, the more perfectly does she discover in herself the secret movements of depraved nature and self-love. She sees them in

great numbers, like filthy serpents, full of poison creeping out of her heart, such as she could not have believed that she had harboured in her bosom. She abhors them and their cursed source, yet does not fret or disturb herself at the sight of her weakness and baseness, but only learns thence to humble herself more and more, to detest that source of pride, vanity, and self-love still subsisting within her, and to labour courageously to extirpate it.

As the sun, from its rising, mounts higher and higher, displaying brighter beams, so her interior light, still growing continually greater, assists her in discerning, and demolishing more perfectly, the tower of self-love, on which all the batteries of all the passions are lodged, and which runs its foundations very deep in vitiated nature, is the object of our perpetual assaults, and can never be entirely destroyed during this mortal life. We must observe also, that the more perfect a soul is, the more grievous is the least sinful offence. The sin increases according to the degree of merits. St. Isidore, L. 21. de sum. bono, c. 18. Whence St. Gregory shows how enormous the least offence is in a priest, if he in anything desert wilfully the warfare, of which he is a leader and head.

2. Both faith and reason teach us, that it is in our power to avoid every particular venial sin; otherwise the committing of it would not be a free action, nor consequently any fault, as St. Augustin says, L. 2. de prec. in prit. c. 8.

But it is an article of this same holy faith, that no one lives entirely exempt from venial sin, unless by an extraordinary succour of grace, as we believe of the blessed Virgin, who, by a special privilege was, as St. Augustin doubts not, L. de nat. et. gr. c. 36, &c., preserved from all kind of sin; nor will the respect we owe to her divine Son, suffer us to call this in question, says the same father; and in his words also, the Council of Trent, Sess. 6. can. 22.

This is a point most clearly expressed in the holy scriptures. "There is a man, who doeth not sin." 3 Kings viii. 46. "We all offend in many things." James iii. 2. "The just man falls seven times a day," *i. e.* often. Prov. xxiv. 16. "If we say that we have no sin, we seduce ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John i. 8. He says not, we have not humility, if we say that, but we deceive ourselves, and say what is false. This our blessed Redeemer sufficiently teaches us in his divine prayer, in which all the just learn to pray continually for the forgiveness of their daily sins, which would not be true in every one's mouth, if every one did not often sin, as St Augustin in many places, St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, St. Gregory, St. Thomas, &c., observe.

The Semipelagian pride denied, that the just fell into frequent venial sins. This heresy was condemned in the Council of Mileve, can. 7, and strenuously confuted by the great doctor of God's grace, St. Augustin, in his several books against those enemies of the necessity of Christ's grace. Also by S. Jerom, L. 2. *contra* Pelag, and L. 2. *contra* Jovinian, and all the subsequent Fathers and Councils. Whence even Cassian, though in another point too much leaning to the Semipelagian error, not then condemned, writes thus: "It is impossible for any of the saints not to incur some of those offences, which are committed by words, by thought, by ignorance, by forgetfulness, by a kind of necessity, by surprise, by sloth, or drowsiness." And St. Augustin in L. de Nat. and Gr. c. 36: "If therefore, excepting the Virgin Mother of God, we could assemble together all the saints, whilst they lived here on earth, and ask them if they were with-

out sin, all would cry out with one voice: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." St. Gregory the Great, L. 4, mor, c. 24. observes, that in the book of Job, stars are said to be darkened with clouds, to signify that souls, even in the saints, drag certain remains of night in this life.

We have reason to adore and bless the mercy of God in bearing with us, so weak and sinful as we are, and in suffering us to live to serve him, at least in something, and to wash away our offences by continual tears and penance. We ought still more to praise his mercy in vouchsafing at last to call us, by death, from this life of sin, that we may cease to sin, and put off all our stains, being translated from this state of banishment and danger into the country of sanctity and pure love. Do not we sigh after that blessed region? Who will give me the wings of the dove, that I may fly speedily from this land of sin, danger, and vanity, and enjoy the true freedom of the blessed? In the meantime, continual watchfulness over myself, prayer, and penance, must be my arms and protection. How faithful ought I to be in the perfect and heroic practice of all these means of my preservation?

3. These venial sins of surprise, as they proceed not from malice, but from a bare want of a continual universal watchfulness, are easily blotted out in the just, who live in a perpetual spirit of penance, which these falls nourish in them, and which excite them daily to serve God more perfectly. But, if they are not thus speedily and carefully washed off, they multiply their wounds, and cause most dangerous consequences in the soul. They produce a subtraction of the operations of the Holy Ghost, and of his particular graces; impair charity, weaken its fervour, create a languor in the soul, a difficulty to be recollected, a coldness in prayer, and pave the way to still more pernicious remote effects. The least sore in the body, if neglected and left uncleansed, to corrupt with dirt and filth, with which it will be soon filled, will fester, and become very painful, nay, at length, will mortify; and if still nothing be done to stop it, will, by a fatal gangrene, cause death. In like manner, the least venial sins, which would be easily wiped away by daily penance, will, by neglect, "overrun the whole soul with blotches, and an universal scab, so that she cannot come to the embraces of her heavenly spouse, at least without great confusion." St. Aug. They will, moreover, putrify, as it were, and come to such a pitch as at last to threaten her spiritual life, and taint and infect all her virtues and good works. The Holy Ghost compares them to flies, which spoil the sweetest ointment by putrifying in it: "Flies dying in the oil corrupt its sweetness." Eccles. x. 1.

The saints are most sensible of the pernicious consequences, and of the venom of this evil. Therefore, they labour with the utmost solicitude to preserve the greatest purity of soul, that nothing in it may offend the eyes of their jealous and holy God, alienate him any way from them, or deprive them of any of his choicest favours. By the least falls, they learn to be daily more watchful, and to have a more strict guard over themselves: thus they advance daily in greater purity of life and manners. To efface immediately all debts they may contract, and to speedily heal all the little wounds which they receive, they never cease weeping and labouring to satisfy for them, by earnest humble prayer, a constant spirit of compunction, and all sorts of good works, performed with a contrite and humble heart. They, above all, repeat with all possible fervour that petition of

our Lord's Prayer for this purpose : " Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us ;" which they have, frequently in the day, in their hearts and mouths. Thus lamenting the sins which they discover in themselves, and also those they do not see, knowing their hidden offences to be many, they say with St. Gregory Nazianzen Carm. de scipso : " I pour forth scalding tears ; yet I add new sins ; and, though I should have exhausted my tears by fresh sins, I still produce new sources of tears."

The principal work of satisfaction, by which these offences are to be expiated, are three : prayer, alms-deeds, and fasting, or all bodily mortifications. But care must be taken, that inward compunction, or a perfect spirit of penance, accompany them, and be their soul. " These sins," says St. Cæsarius, Hom. 8, "must be continually redeemed by perpetual prayers, frequent fasts, large alms, and the forgiveness of other offences against us." And St. Leo, Serm. 10, de jejun. mens : " To heal the wounds which they frequently receive, who are engaged in this conflict with our spiritual enemy, the salve of three medicines is chiefly to be employed, fervent prayer, the mortification of fasting, and charity, by plentiful alms." St. Augustin, ep. ad Seleuc., calls our Lord's Prayer, in particular, the daily penance of the good Christians. He also says, Hom. ult. inter. 50 : " Our lesser sins separate us from the embraces of our spouse, unless they are cut off by daily penance. To blot out which, we every day strike our breasts, and acknowledge ourselves sinners."

The sacraments of penance and the blessed Eucharist, and the sacrifice of the Mass, which is offered for the remission of sins, are the most powerful remedies of venial sin. That of penance was expressly instituted by Christ, for the remission of all sin, and nothing can contribute more to purify our souls than the devout use of it. It is particularly suitable before the holy communion, which requires the greatest purity from all stain that is possible. The sacrament of the blessed Eucharist is the restorer of our impaired spiritual strength, and " the antidote by which we are delivered from our daily faults, and preserved from mortal sins," as the Council of Trent explains its effects. Sess. 13. c. 2. Whence St. Ambrose says, L. 2, de sacr. c. 6 : " I, who am always sick, ought always to take my physic." On the Mass, he observes in the same place : " If, as often as the blood of Christ is poured forth, it is spilt for the remission of sins, that my sins may be always forgiven me ; I who sin always, ought always to use the remedy." This holy sacrifice is then to be assisted at in the most perfect spirit of penance, as it is the great means of satisfaction and propitiation.

Praying in holy places, striking our breasts, benedictions of the church, and the devout use of holy water, contribute to blot out venial sins, through the public prayers and blessings of the church, but only if they are accompanied with the inward true spirit of compunction and penance. Therefore, when we take the holy water, for example, we must be very solicitous that we do it with these sincere sentiments and affections, praying in our hearts : " Sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, not dipped in the blood of sacrifices or goats, the weak offerings of the old law, but in the blood of the immaculate Lamb, the true propitiation of our offences ; may it cleanse perfectly my soul, and it will be pure in thy holy eyes." For prayer and all these other means have no power or effect, but through the blood of Christ, the only source of grace and propitiation.

Besides watching over ourselves, we may imitate St. Charles Borromeo,

who begged his director, and also a faithful director, to daily advertise him of the least faults he should observe in him. This vigilance and fear can alone discover and remove the beginnings of our evils, which otherwise, like imperceptible vapours rising out of the earth, soon form great clouds. The maxim usually given for the preservation of bodily health: "Oppose the beginnings," is still more necessary for our salvation.

We must, by self-examination, discover our most secret faults; must pierce into the most inward recesses of the mind, strip off every disguise, lay open the inward part, make a strict scrutiny into the very soul and spirit, and critically judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. James i. 23. This we must do with an impartial severity, sensible how apt our heart is to deceive us, and how treacherous and deceitful it is. Its wiles and doublings are so hidden and intricate, that it requires the nicest care and most steady attention to detect and unfold them.

MEDITATION XII.

ON HABITUAL SIN.

A CRIMINAL habit not broken aggravates the malice of every sin committed by it, and requires immediate repentance.

It is very difficult to be overcome.

It is easily formed, and increases its strength by the quickest, though most imperceptible progress.

1. An habit is a facility or propensity produced by repeated acts. For example: a man, by often swearing, acquires an unhappy proneness to that vice. Such a propensity may indeed be sometimes created by one act, if it be a very intense one.

Divines teach, with St. Thomas of Aquin, that sin is more grievous by the circumstance of its being a sin of habit. First, because the will adheres to it, and embraces it with far greater eagerness, vehemence, and obstinacy, than in sins of frailty and surprise. The choice is also more deliberate, at least in the cause, which is the habit.

Secondly, the habit is a most lasting and fixed resolution of preferring the offence and enmity of God to his service, which is also increased by every act produced by the habit: as, on the contrary, a vow or constant resolution of any perpetual virtuous practice adds to the very act the merit and value of such a perpetual sacrifice. On these accounts, St. Thomas teaches, that sins of habit are sins of mere malice, and the most voluntary of all others. But this is to be understood of a habit still subsisting entire; for, after the will has sincerely broken it, and labours to root it out, if it should yet be carried by its violence into some sin, this will be deemed no longer an act of malice, but of family.

Thirdly, we must add, that every habit is, by its own nature, an immediate occasion of sin, and an interior one which cannot be avoided by flight; consequently, it is the worst of all occasions. As then, for a man voluntarily to expose himself to an immediate occasion of mortal sin is always a mortal sin, it must be such wilfully to create or fortify any vicious habit, the most dangerous of all occasions, and such a one as the man

must always carry about with him and in his own bosom. Hence, the circumstance of a habit in a mortal sin is to be declared in confession. Which, indeed, it ought to be, were it only to make known the true state of the penitent's soul, in order to receive proper advice and a suitable penance, though often this circumstance will be sufficiently known from the confession itself. This propositon is condemned by Pope Innocent XI. n. 58: "We are not bound to confess the custom of any sin to the confessor who asks it."

Yet sinners sometimes allege the violence of their attachment to their passions, and the difficulty they find in overcoming their vicious habits, as an excuse of their crimes and delays of repentance. This is certainly the height of impiety and of obstinacy in evil. For, to call the victory over their passions impossible is, on one side, tacitly to accuse God, as if he granted not sufficient graces, though all the time he stands at the door of their hearts, and knocks there, offering all necessary succours. If they receive these sparingly, the cause is in wilful obstacles; let them but remove these, and they will receive more abundant helps. Can a man, who wilfully shuts his eyes at bright noon-day, accuse the sun, as if it did not give light? On the other side, they make that a pretext for their impiety, which severely condemns it. For, did not their own wilful malice first create, and is it not that which still continues to fortify their habits? They themselves are the authors of all their strength. Their tyranny, indeed, is now very great. But this motive again ought to engage them to resist without delay, and no longer increase for one moment such dire misfortunes.

Some say, they have often entered upon this work, but have always fallen back again, and now look upon it almost with despair, unless some lucky accident weaken their chains. But those miscarriages happened, because the resolutions were too faint, only half-wills. A thorough and perfect resolution breaks all obstacles at once; they would almost vanish and disappear before it. It is often our cowardice that exaggerates, or even creates, out of phantoms, the difficulties of conversion. "It is not," says the heathen philosopher Seneca, ep. 104, "because things are difficult, that we dare not aim at them; but they appear difficult, because we have not courage." In habits the difficulties are strong indeed; but if we begin in earnest, and form a perfect resolution, they, though ever so real, will be already half vanquished. Nothing is so hard to be done, which serious application does not master. Experience shows how incredibly persons find themselves advanced by it, insensibly and before they are aware, in what before they thought impossible. Even the effectual will, once thoroughly formed, with an entire courage and unshaken purpose, goes the greater part of the way, as a heathen poet justly observed:

> "Who sets about, hath half perform'd the deed.
> Dare to be wise, and if you would succeed,
> Begin."*

If the severity of the conflict dismays any one, let him not look too long before him at once, lest he may be dejected. Let him make his resolu-

* Dimidium facti qui bene cœpit habet;
Sapere aude, ————
Incipi.—HORAT. l. 1. ep. 2. v. 40.

tions first for one day or week, and when that is over for another. Such a prospect will not seem so affrighting or impossible; yet he will by that means, in a short time, find his obstacles overcome. An ancient solitary said to himself in the morning, that he would fast till noon; then, that he would prolong it till night, and so on, till he had brought himself to imitate the greatest fasters in the desert. Let the sinner consider the examples of St. Mary Magdalen, St. Augustin, and of innumerable souls who have happily broken far stronger habits, and encourage himself, saying to his soul: Canst not thou do what those have done, so many weak and tender men and women, so many labouring under greater difficulties? The difficulty is to form an effectual resolution, determined to use all violences, and break through all obstacles.

Every one must be encouraged in this conflict, if he consider that the difficulties will daily grow lighter, and at length be even changed into delights. He will then joyfully repeat to himself: "Because I have laboured a little, I have found to myself much repose." Eccl. iii. 35. This the Holy Ghost assures him: "In its work thou shalt labour a little, and shall soon eat of its fruits." Eccl. vi. 20. And again: "I will lead thee through the paths of justice, which when thou shalt have entered, thy steps shall not be straitened, and running, thou shalt meet no stumbling block." Prov. vi. 11. Oh! how agreeable will the sweets of liberty and virtue seem to such a soul! What a pleasure will it be to be delivered from the slavery of her habits, and to see her chains broken!

"At first, a thing seems to thee insupportable; in process of time, by custom, thou will judge it not so hard; soon after, thou wilt not feel it; and then shortly it will even delight thee," says St. Bernard, l. 1. de consid., and before him, St. John Climacus, Gr. l. n. 18. This St. Cyprian witnesses by his own experience, ad Donat. "I formerly said to myself," says he, "how is so great a change possible? But after a second birth in Christ had made me a new man, my troubles all vanished in a wonderful manner. What had seemed difficult was easy; what was thought impossible, I saw then to be feasible." And St. Augustin, who, before his conversion had thought he could never live without these or those pleasures, soon after said with jubilation of heart: "How sweet was it immediately to me to be without the enchanting charms of those follies! What I once feared to lose, it was my joy to be freed from." l. 8. Confess. c. 3.

Certain unthinking sinners say they will convert themselves hereafter. Alas! who ever designedly gave time to an enemy to strengthen himself by reinforcements? Who, finding a burthen too heavy, would wait till it should be doubled? Trees are not to be pulled up after they have taken deep root; and experience shows the truth of that divine oracle: "The young man, according to his way, even when he is grown old, will not depart from it." Prov. xxii. 6. "He shall be filled with vices as his bones are with marrow. These will never forsake him, but will sleep with him in the dust and in hell." Job. xx. 12.

They repent hereafter; but they do not reflect that God is daily, in punishment of their resistance, withdrawing himself farther from them. Sampson had often broken his cords, and revenged himself on the Philistines; seeing himself again bound by them, he said, yet laughing in himself: "I will go forth as before, and shaking myself break my bonds, and revenge myself on my enemies." Judg. vi. 20. But alas! he

said this, little then knowing that God had forsaken him. In like manner, the habitual sinner will find his presumption justly punished, and himself abandoned under the tyranny of his passions. Again, his habit gaining ground in the meanwhile will bind him much harder, and will change the state of his soul much for the worse. All the divine seeds, the gifts of nature, the benefits of grace, the sentiments of religion, will soon be corrupted in her lying by, and, as it were, rotting in her disorders. A spiritual blindness will spread itself over her understanding. God will forsake her, and even watch to make her abuse of his long forbearance the object of his justice. He will revenge his own cause, and with his own hand conduct her punishment. "Mine is vengeance—that their foot may slip," says he, Deut. xxxii. 55. He will pronounce this sentence upon her: "He that is in filth, let him be filthy still." Apoc. xxii. 11.

2. The tyranny of a vicious habit ought to move us to dread and shun its dangers, or, without delay, to root it out, if it be already our misfortune to have contracted it. A habit, whether good or evil, is of wonderful force, and draws a soul with a violence quite incredible to those who have never experienced it. One who has formed long habits of virtue cannot suddenly lose them. This is still more true in vicious habits, especially in carnal sins, such as impurity and drunkenness. To this many things concur. The organs of the body, by frequent use, acquire such a disposition to those acts, as to run into them of themselves, and sometimes without reflection, as we see in habitual swearers. Nothing but extreme watchfulness and perfect violence can stop them. These reiterated acts also imprint in the soul a certain imperious quality, which drags her by a kind of necessity, and which is called a sort of second nature. Every act makes this deeper and stronger, driving in, as it were, a new nail. The poor soul is enslaved and chained by it, scarcely remaining mistress of her own will: or, to speak more properly, her will is to become her chain, and is so captivated that it is with the greatest difficulty she can disengage herself. She is bound fast down, not by any outward chain, but by her own iron will, as St. Augustin expresses it from his own woful experience: "*Suspirabam ligatus non ferro alieno, sed mea ferrea voluntate.*" Conf. l. 8. The poor will is so absolutely possessed, as to be reduced to a perfect slavery under the tyranny of this habit, and to have almost lost the command of itself.

Moreover, a habit of sin destroys the three barriers, which God had set on our souls, to defend us from sin, viz., shame of evil, fear of God, and dread of punishment. Any of these often stops the sinner, and preserves him from committing the evil which his passions suggest. But a criminal habit breaks them all down, hurries on the soul like a torrent, and blinds her to all other considerations, except only that of its infamous object. God has taken away her force, and abandoned her to pillage. Isaiah v.

Add, that habit produces such a blindness in the understanding, and such a hardness of heart, that God's terrible threats, the frightful scenes of judgment, and a miserable eternity, examples or other visitations of God, make but small impressions on the sinner, and the most pathetic exhortations touch him not. "The impious man, when he is come into the depth, contemns." Prov. xviii. 3. Only a miracle of grace can convert him. He will often deplore his misery, and make faint resolutions; but a firm effectual will to convert himself costs tears of blood.

St. Augustin observes, Tr. 49. in Joan, that in the three persons raised corporally from the dead by our Saviour, the three states of sinners are figured. The soul fallen into sin by surprise, by the daughter of the prince of the synagogue. Christ only said to her: "Rise, daughter," and she rose alive. The soul fallen with full deliberation, by the widow of Naim's son, Luke ix. 14. Christ touched the coffin to raise him. Lazarus, who had been four days in his grave, and began already to putrify, figures sinners buried in habit. To restore him to life, it cost Jesus many tears. He prayed as for something extraordinary; he was troubled, he wept, and cried out with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth." John xi. 45. To raise him was the most difficult miracle. His hands and feet were tied, his body wrapped in a shroud, bound with bands, and laid under a large stone. Such is the state of a sinner, plunged in a vicious habit. Many engagements of his affections bind him, many strong impediments fold him, and a heavy load holds him down. "How difficultly does he rise, whom the weight of custom oppresses!" cries out St. Augustin. The reasons hereof are plain, from the incontestible principles already laid down. For the habitual sinner is buried in the stench of his crimes; a heavy load is laid upon him, and "he is bound by the chains of his sins." Prov.

O sinners, "this very day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Ps. xciv. 8. Open your hearts to God's grace, and your ears to his gracious calls. The Son of God approaches you, and cries out with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth." Sinner, awake, arise from your iniquity, come out of this sepulchre of death. He is able still to restore you to life. He would not continue to call you, if he did not earnestly desire your conversion. You have your voice left; cry out, then, to him most earnestly from the depth of your miseries, though they are extreme; he will most certainly deliver you. Let the difficulties be ever so great, a firm resolution, with his grace, will remove them; and though your deliverance were to cost ever so much, it would still be indispensable; and eternity deserves far more. A delay in this great work is sure, in the ordinary course of providence, to lose all, and that irretrievably.

3. However dreadful and tyrannical evil habits are, they are easily formed, and thus grow violent imperceptibly. Their imperious tyranny and terrible consequences no ways declare themselves in the beginning. The first steps do not, in appearance, lead so far, nor do their effects seem so fatal. And one is a step to another, in such a manner, that a soul falls into the next still more easily, and is a slave while she yet imagines herself free, and is fast chained before she sees or thinks of any such thing. A single thread is weak, but many wreaths twisted together make a cord too strong to be broken. A plant pushes continually, but so insensibly, that to those who see it every day there appears no change in it from one day to the next; yet it mounts apace, and in a short time acquires its full growth, and this from a root hidden in the earth, and not to be perceived. In like manner do habits form themselves, and acquire the greatest strength before their rise or increase is perceived. The man is not himself aware of it, till he thinks of disengaging himself: he only finds how fast he is bound, when he attempts to break his cords. Then he is surprised to see the extreme violence which he suffers, *e. g.* in the separation from a person, for whom before he only perceived in himself what he thought an affection of a just esteem, or in the renouncing a certain place or action. He says, I could not have believed my soul had been thus captivated: I never, before

this moment, felt the disposition of my heart. It is not that the engagement had not the same force before; but he had not perceived those chains, which delighted him: for our heart goes farther than we design, and without thinking of it, or observing its motions.

The most tyrannical habit in the beginning was but a small spark, from which no one could foresee such terrible consequences; but the fire gained by degrees, and became a devouring flame, which baffled all endeavours, and was not now to be resisted without violent means. Ah! men see not whither this liberty, this company, this affection, this secret pride or envy will carry them. But habits are formed, and acquire strength very fast; and the extremities of fury, extravagance, blindness, and madness, to which they at length blindly hurry men, are astonishing. In virtues, indeed, they meet with contradictions and obstacles from the opposition of concupiscence and the passions. But, by a contrary rule, vice finds, in the corruption of concupiscence, only attraction and nourishment. The inclinations of nature, depraved by sin, tending of their own accord to delight in it, and the senses being flattered and charmed by it, give to a wicked habit the greatest progress. Thus a man rolling down a steep hill, or falling into a rapid torrent, is carried as swiftly as the declivity is steep, or the stream more impetuous. Habits of virtue rise up, as it were, against the stream; but vice glides down with the current. Virtue has the basis of the passions against it, and must master them before it can reign in our hearts; but vice follows them. Virtue is planted in our heart as in a soil, which, through the corruption of sin, has become foreign to it, and in which it cannot grow, unless it be cultivated with great care, attention, and labour, and continually nourished and watered with divine grace: but vice is a weed of the proper growth of this soil.

> He that once sins, like him that slides on ice,
> Goes swiftly down the slippery ways of vice:
> Tho' conscience checks him, yet, those rubs gone o'er,
> He slides on smoothly, and looks back no more.
>
> JUVENAL, Sat. 13.

The first sin is single, but, unless speedily blotted out by a sincere repentance, makes a second more easy. By two or three falls, a custom together with a habit or proneness is produced: this custom, not resisted, becomes a second nature, as St. Augustin says. The first acts begin a chain, which binds the soul and clogs her will with fetters; every sin is a new link, as it were, and locks her firmer and closer. In this state she is a slave. She, indeed, often says, that she will arise and free herself: she makes often resolutions for this purpose; but as often does the weight of her habit draw her back, and passion still triumphs. Hence proceed delays, trouble, agitations, conflicts, waves of contrary thoughts, driving her backwards and forwards. She wills and wills not: desires to be disengaged, yet fears to be so; and goes on always dragging her chains, both hating, and yet delighted with her slavery. She heaps crime upon crime, and engages herself, as it were, laughing in a necessity of sinning and of damnation. This expression is not too strong. For habit is a kind of violence, which captivates the will. *Velle meum tenebat inimicus:* St. Augustin's Confess. The Holy Ghost compares the power, which such a soul has of converting herself, to that of a blackmoor to change the colour of his skin, or a leopard his motley spots; Jer. xiii. 35; things naturally impossible. Not that these comparisons are perfectly adequate: but that they show the great difficulty of the conversion of the habitual sinner.

My soul, as sinful habits may be so easily contracted, and yet are so imperious, and so fatal, watch attentively over all thy inclinations, thoughts, and actions, and spare nothing to preserve thyself from this dreadful enemy, which, if once admitted, can never be expelled without the severest martyrdom, and conflicts, and tears even of blood; or, what is more to be feared, will never be overcome at all, but carrying thee, reeking from thy sins, into the eternal pit. If it be already thy misfortune to groan under this evil, free thyself without delay; be not discouraged at resistance. It is impossible to die to sin without much sadness, sorrow, pain, and contradiction to corrupt nature, which is in love with its own chains and evil habits. But victory will soon turn this into happy freedom and joy. The devil perceiving thy desire to rise, will employ all his malice to stifle it, by suggestions of despair; but confidence in God will easily defeat him.

MEDITATION XIII.

ON THE SIN OF RELAPSE.

A SIN of relapse is most enormous.

The obstacles to its removal are, in a particular manner, very great.

The ordinary resources of conversion lose their force by it.

1. To relapse into sin is to return to it, after having renounced it by repentance. This may be either with or without a custom or habit of sin; for a custom implies a frequency of the acts, which may be when no repentance has preceded; and a habit adds a propensity to sin, arising from repeated actions. A sin of relapse carries along with it a particular enormity. Its malice is aggravated by three circumstances, which accompany it, viz., a notorious contempt of God, a special perfidiousness, and ingratitude. A contempt of the divine Majesty is a general circumstance found in all sin; but a relapse contains a particular and remarkable kind of contempt; by it a sinner undoes again what he had so solemnly done for God. He had destroyed in his soul the works of the devil, banished him out of his heart, restored it to God, who had again taken possession of it, re-established in it the kingdom of his grace, sanctified and honoured it again with his gifts, and with his most holy presence, and made it his throne on earth. The relapsing sinner overturns all this great work, and makes use of so extraordinary a mercy to God, only to insult him the more outrageously. If a king had not only pardoned a base traitor, but restored him to all his forfeited titles and honours, and to the highest posts and dignities of his empire, would he not think himself most grievously injured, and his majesty trampled upon, if that wretch should return again to his villanous practices against his person and crown? Would not this be a part so wicked and base, that it seems scarcely possible that any man could be so abandonedly profligate, and lost to all sentiments, as to be capable of it? This, however, is the treatment which the sovereign God of heaven and earth receives from the relapsing sinner, who, with the most contemptuous baseness, tramples upon and destroys in himself his most precious gifts, and by them insults his bounty. "If I rebuild what I have destroyed, I make myself a prevaricator," that is, remarkably so, says the Apostle. Gal. ii. 18.

The sinner does this with the most perfect knowledge of what he is doing. He has tasted, and has had experience of the service of Christ, and compared the sweetness and glory of his holy yoke with the baseness and slavery of sin. It is after the trial and knowledge of both sides, that he pronounces sentence in favour of sin, and gives the preference to the devil; after having, by penance, says Tertullian, l. de pœnit. c. 7, renounced God's enemy, the devil.

He causes him again to triumph over God, and makes himself his prey; that he, having recovered his soul, may exult against the Lord. Though it cannot be spoken without trembling, nor thought of without horror, does he not formally prefer Satan to God? For he seems to have made a comparison, after knowing both, and, by an absolute sentence, pronounced him the better master, whose servant he, after all, chooses rather to be; as he before did penance to God for his sins, so now he makes atonement to the devil, for that holy penance, by an execrable repentance of it, and hereby makes himself so much the more detestable to God, as he becomes more pleasing to the devil. Though this is not done by an express thought of such a formed judgment in the mind, which would be the most terrible blasphemy; yet it is done in fact, which is still the most terrible contempt, and such as cannot be thought of. Nor can the sinner here allege any excuse of ignorance or surprise, as he was perfectly instructed, on one side, in all that regards the inestimable value of God's grace; and, on the other, in the nature of the offence, and in the danger of the occasions that lead to it.

The enormity of a relapse is aggravated also by a signal perfidiousness which it involves. The sinner, when he repents, promises to God in the most solemn manner to renounce sin for ever, and passes this his engagement in the most sacred contract with him. Men are jealous of their word when given to a fellow-creature, and there is nothing they abhor more than the character of a perfidious wretch; and certainly nothing is more inviolable than a fidelity to engagements, which is the bond, nay the soul and essence, of public faith, and without which no contracts, commerce, or society amongst men could subsist. But the relapsing sinner is guilty of the greatest violation of it that can be possible. He breaks his word, which he had given to God, first, in his solemn baptismal vows, and which he renews as often at least as he frequents the sacraments. So often then was a sacred contract passed between him and God, the condition of which was, on his side, this engagement, without which Almighty God would have never admitted him to pardon and his highest graces; for it was on condition that he reciprocally bound himself unto him, that he enriched and honoured him, and engaged himself always to treat him as his son. This infidelity is then, the basest breach of faith, of faith given to God, and this in the most solemn manner, in the holy place, in the face of the altars, all the blessed spirits of heaven being witnesses and depositories thereof; in a contract and alliance sealed by all that is most holy and terrible; confirmed by the blood of the Lamb of God, the immaculate Lamb, and by the most sacred ceremonies; vowed in the hands of God's ministers, who received them in his name. By an unparalleled treachery, this contract is broken; these holy engagements are trampled upon by a base creature, whilst God remains most faithful on his side, and the eternal allegiance and fidelity sworn to him, in the face of heaven and earth, violated, even whilst he is still showering down his favours on the transgressor. The altars, the walls, the ministers who received these engagements in the person of

Christ himself, all the heavenly spirits, who were witnesses of the penitent's tears and protestations, will rise up in judgmdnt against him, and condemn him from the words of his own mouth. "The stone from the wall will cry out." Hab. ii. 11.

Nothing can be a greater baseness than that which this unfaithful soul is guilty of. How contemptible art thou made, reiterating thy first ways, which thou hadst, in so sacred and solemn a manner, renounced and foresworn? "*Quam vilis facta es nimis, iterans vias tuas.*" Jer. ii. 36. "That of the true proverb has happened to them: The dog has returned to his vomit; and the sow, that was washed, to her wallowing." Pet. ii. 2.

To be a child, and never to know one's own mind, in things of the greatest importance, is the highest degree of baseness.

Ingratitude likewise aggravates a relapse above other sins. Gratitude is an essential obligation of a creature, and an homage, of which the Creator shows himself exceedingly jealous. And the greater any benefit is, the blacker must be the ingratitude with regard to it. Now no mercy can be greater, or granted to one more unworthy, than the pardon of sin. The soul was a member of the devil, a monster of iniquity, loaded with curses and anathemas, which were to have been eternal. She is, by God's unspeakable mercy, delivered from these dreadful miseries, made his child, heiress of his kingdom, and enriched with his graces, honours, and privileges. This inestimable benefit, yet subsisting in all its lustre and all its advantages, is not only forgotten, but trampled upon. The Holy Ghost, with his graces, is contemptuously banished the heart, and his seat sacrilegiously made the throne of Satan, who is introduced in his room. What would be our just indignation against a villanous traitor, who, after being pardoned by his prince, should again rebel and bereave him of his crown and life, as the base Egfrid is said by some to have done against the merciful King Edmund Ironside? though, except that monster, there is not, perhaps, another example of such an ingratitude to be found. Yet this is nothing to the unparalleled ingratitude of the relapsing sinner.

This ingratitude is the greater, as the sins formerly forgiven were more grievous and more numerous, and as the relapse is in itself more heinous. Though the sins before pardoned are not revived again by a relapse; as Pope Gelasius, l. dist. 4 de pœnit. c. 24.; St. Prosper, ad cap. Gall. p. 198.; St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and others prove; yet, as all agree with St. Thomas, 3 p. q. 88, a. 1, 2, and 3, they return equivalently, on account of the special ingratitude of the relapsing sinner; but in a certain proportion knowing only to God, according to the enormity of the relapse. Whence St. Gregory the Great, in his Morals, quoted by St. Thomas, says: "As good works, which die by sin, revive by repentance; so also evil works, which are blotted out by repentance, by a relapse revive to punishment."

"O man, sin not after pardon; be not wounded after a cure; be not again defiled after grace. A fault, after forgiveness, is more grievous; a wound, after being once healed, is worse; it is base to return to the mire after being cleansed. He is ungrateful to the pardon, unworthy of heaven, and deserves not to be cleansed." St. Chrys. hom. de lapsu primi. hom.

2. A true conversion becomes much more difficult after a relapse. Our blessed Saviour says, that when the unclean spirit enters a man, from whom he had been before expelled, "he taketh away with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there." Luke xi. 26.

If this be true of one relapse, what must we think of repeated ones multiplied upon each other? The obstacles to a sincere conversion become much greater to such a one, than they are to other sinners. The devil re-enters him with his forces redoubled, holds him now in a much stronger captivity, and seems to possess him in peace. The sinner, on the other side, is made weaker as he is farther removed from God; his passions gain strength, and by his relapses form themselves into imperious habits, not to be easily broken. He could have easily destroyed the serpent, whilst it was little: the fiercest lions are easily crushed whilst very young; but, when grown up, will make the most valiant man, without arms, to tremble. Little rivulets are easily turned off near their spring, but surpass our art when swollen into great rivers.

These habits of sin are usually accompanied with habits of the most sacrilegious abuses of the sacraments and other means of grace, and always with a great spiritual blindness and insensibility. The sinner is lulled asleep under his dangers, and neither sees nor feels his miseries. He is at ease for the past, having often confessed all, though his false reconciliations only blinded him, and added new wounds, harder to be healed than the first.

Inconstancy itself grows into a habit, and the most pernicious of habits. The sinner is accustomed to find both the service of God and the slavery of the devil tiresome in their turns, and to endeavour often to change sides. Hence, when glutted and wearied with sin, he seeks to return to God; but doing this only by halves, he soon relapses into his sins, which he never perfectly renounced. He is like a man sick of some lingering incurable dry tympany, or some other such distemper, which affords intervals of an apparent recovery; but, as the bowels are already rotten and pierced in many places, the distemper soon shows itself again, and the wind, pent up and dilated, makes greater ravages within him than ever until the next evacuation and respite, at which the deluded patient is again big with the flattering confidence of an imaginary health. Just such is the case of the inconstant penitent, or habitually relapsing sinner. In his fits of repentance, the devil is no ways alarmed at the projects of conversion, which he then forms, and the imperfect efforts he makes: he knows these will go no farther than before, and that he lifts up his hand, indeed, but will not dare effectually to give the stroke, and that the circle of repentance and sin will still run in the same way, and the old alternative still take its course. The subtle enemy therefore gives him little disturbance, as one whom he holds in peace; only he helps him to shut his eyes to his miseries, and fondly to deceive himself in his pretended conversion.

This inconstancy is not only a tyrannical habit and slavery, hard to be shaken off, but it also causes the greatest obstacles to the corresponding with grace, engendering in the soul an inveterate lethargy and stupidity, which nothing can stir or move, and which is incapable of any settled firm dispositions. Hence our Saviour says of such: "No man setting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke ix. 62. He does not say, "is excluded from it," but, what expresses much more, is not fit, *i. e.* has qualities and dispositions incompatible with a vocation to it. Let him then speedily shake them off, and renounce sin once for all, and in good earnest.

3. If a relapse, on one hand, increases the obstacles of a sincere con-

version, on the other it weakens exceedingly the ordinary means and resources thereof, and makes them often unprofitable, and, by their abuse, pernicious. St. Paul considered this, when he said: "It is impossible (*i. e.* very hard) for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; have moreover tasted the word of God, and the powers of the world to come; and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance, crucifying to themselves the Son of God, and making him a mockery." Heb. vi. 4. One first converted from sin is struck at the new light of grace, and moved with shame and grief to have offended God, and renounced his reason. But this resource loses a great deal of its force, and is generally unprofitable to the inconstant sinner. He has often experienced the lights of grace, and now takes little notice of them. *Who were once illuminated.* The first time the Jews in the desert saw the pillar of light over their camp, they were surprised and moved, so as to fear the punishment of their disobedience; but, after they had been accustomed to that sign of heaven, they frequently murmured and rebelled: the pillar still appeared, but made little impression on their minds; by custom, they were become insensible to it.

Not only the supernatural lights of the understanding by grace, but also the inspirations of the will, become often unprofitable to such persons. These likewise they have tried, and now little regard them. "They have tasted the heavenly gift." What can inspiration now offer them, that they have not often contemned? Will the strongest charms of grace prevail over a heart long accustomed to receive its motions in vain? The same we may say of the word of God, pious books, sacraments, and the other means of grace. "They have tasted of the word of God, and of the powers of the world to come." Long abuse had engaged the soul in a habit of contemning them. What then must the unhappy soul do? Is she to be abandoned to despair? Are these means to be laid aside? God, forbid. But these dispositions of the heart are to be vigorously removed, and a more serious use made of them. Till then there is no appearance, that they will be more effectual than hitherto. "Thy wound is incurable; thy bruise desperate: remedies have no power of profiting thee." *Insanabilis, est fractura tua, pessima plaga tua—curationum utilitas non est tibi.*" Jer. xxx. 12, 13.

God usually withdraws his most powerful graces, and abandons such relapsing sinners. Witness the impious king Sedecias, one day listening to the prophet, another day casting him into dungeons or lions' dens. Witness the Jews, after frequent relapses, forsaken by God in the most dreadful manner. An abuse of grace justly draws on a substraction of it. "The earth, that drinketh in the rain which often comes upon it, but bringeth forth thorns and briers, is reprobate, and very near to a curse, whose end is to be burnt." Heb. vi. 8. God's patience is wearied out: he has borne with this sinner these several relapses, but at last casts him off. "On the three crimes of Damascus, and on the fourth I will not convert him." Amos i. 3.[a] My soul, if thou hast recovered God's grace by his

[a] The author of the Commentary on the Relapse, under the name of St. Ambrose, c. 4, s. 3, p. 834, ed. vet. compares the habitual relapsing sinner to a man lying in the mire, who should beg of another to draw him out; yet, as often as he would stretch out his hand to free him, the cowardly wretch should pull back his arm, and

unspeakable mercy, be ever most solicitous, watchful, and fearful, lest thou again forfeit it. A relapse would be most dangerous and most enormous. "It had been better for them never to have known the way of justice, than, after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment, which was delivered to them." 2 Pet. ii. 21. Praise the goodness of God in bearing thy past relapses, and never cease to deplore them with continual tears of repentance and bitter sorrow.

MEDITATION XIV.

REPENTANCE IN CONSTANT RELAPSING SINNERS USUALLY FALSE.

THIS appears from the nature of the grace of reconciliation.

2. And from the nature of firm sincere will.

3. It is confirmed from the practice and doctrine of the pastors and doctors of the church from their earliest ages.

1. The misfortune of relapses is common among Christians. The Church's tribunal is always thronged with penitents. At least at Easter, even the most abandoned habitual sinners never fail to pretend, that they sincerely repent, and will begin a new life. Yet a few days, as if it were for decency and fashion's sake, are no sooner over, than most of them are the same they were before. Those, who the last year were drunkards, this year return to the taverns, frequent old occasions, and fall into the excesses they pretended so solemnly to abjure for ever. Habitual swearers, after a short time of restraint, continue their ancient course as if it had never been interrupted, are as subject to passion and other occasions of their criminal course of life as before, and renew their sins. Those who are subject to choler, make their families and neighbourhood witness, that their repentance was but a short respite, not an entire renunciation of their sallies and transports. In short, though the churches are filled with the sighs of penitents, the world seems much the same: little or no alteration appears in its manners: its taverns are equally full of revelling and drunkenness; its streets still ring with execrable oaths grating our ears; its stage, the bane of innocence, continues to be crowded, without any apprehension of evil or danger; and sin seems to reign as much as ever. Ah! could this be, were men's repentance sincere, as it is pretended? May we not say of such sinners' penitence what St. Gregory said of Judas's, that it was worse than his fall? It only adds a new crime, and lulls them into a state of insensibility under the greatest evils. It is of such false repentance, that St. Chrysostom says, Hom. 3, in 2 Cor.: "The devil leads some by sin, others by penance, into damnation."

Such persons as live in an habitual vicissitude of penance and sin, of rising and falling, can never have been true penitents. The sacraments, which they receive in that state of inconstancy, can be no better than sacri-

plunge himself deeper under his mud. Would not the other, at last, wearied and angry to be so often deluded, go away, and leave him in his sink? Do not those act in the same manner with God, who often pray him to deliver them from their vices, yet embrace them so close as to refuse to be effectually separated from them? Will not he, to punish their contempt of his Majesty, at last forsake them?

leges and hypocrisy, how much soever they may flatter themselves upon their pretended sincere dispositions. It must be allowed indeed, that a sacrament does not confirm all persons in grace : one may relapse after it by surprise, and through some extraordinary occasion, or after the grace of reconciliation has been gradually weakened by a train of smaller infidelities. But to return to sin soon and easily must clearly demonstrate, that the conversion was false and only pretended ; especially if this has frequently happened, as in habitual relapses. This appears from the nature of the grace of justification. True repentance is a grace, and the most extraordinary of graces. Now, all works of God are strong and effectual. He raised not Lazarus from the grave, that he might die immediately again. His cures of the sick and lame were not for an instant ; but true and to endure. Thus, when he justifies a sinner, he makes it not a shadow, but a solid work, able to stand proof. The foolish man may build on sand ; not so God. His edifice is raised on a rock, with good foundations, able to bear up against winds and storms. He does not raise the sinner by halves, so weakly as only to furnish in him an immediate triumph to the devil over himself and his grace. Such a repentance is a shadow of a conversion, only that the devil may be glorified by it. Christ says, that Lazarus's short death was only a sleep, that God may be glorified by it.

God accompanies sanctifying grace, in the justification of a sinner, with all other necessary helps and graces to support and preserve it. Before a fall, these must be a long weakening by degrees : many dangers neglected, many smaller infidelities must have impaired them, and paved a way to the fatal precipice. The gulf of a relapse follows not so close on the grace of reconciliation. An habit of grace is settled in firm and lasting dispositions ; it is never floating and inconstant. It is then plain, that where a man relapses again easily, by ordinary temptations, in a short time ; where he falls without having for some time resisted the enemy, used great efforts, maintained his ground a considerable time, his conversion could never have been true. The dignity of the nature of the sacrament obliges us to form this judgment.

St. Paul, Rom. vi. 4, 5, 6, 9, gives this essential idea of a true repentance, that it resembles the resurrection of Christ, who, now that he is risen, dies no more. Do we see David, St. Paul, Magdalen, or other true penitents, return again to the vomit ? It is the double-minded that is inconstant in his ways. "*Vir duplex animo inconstans est in viis suis.*" James i. 8. Such persons resemble phantoms of bodies, which appear a short time like bodies risen, but soon vanish, while the corpse itself never leaves the grave.

2. The very nature of repentance shows it to be of a permanent nature. In the conversion of a sinner, a contract is passed between him and God. Almighty God engaged himself to pardon him past offences, and to afford him abundant graces and succours for the time to come. The condition on the sinner's side, without which there could be no such thing as true repentance, was a sincere sorrow for and a hearty detestation of sin above all things, with an effectual resolution of avoiding it, and all the occasions of it, at all rates, for evermore. To pretend to repent, without this essential disposition, is only to mock God, insult the church, and profane the most holy sacraments. Now, is it possible, that one who after confession returns to the vomit, almost on the first occasion, who commits, perchance, before the end of the week, and by usual occasions, what he

pretends to have abhorred above all evils on the Sunday, whose life, perhaps, is made up of such repentances and relapses, should ever have truly detested sin ?

In penance, an entire new creature is formed with great labour and successive endeavours. This is a work of time, raised by degrees. It has its commencement and its progress, till it be at length finished. The will in a state of sin is weak, sick to death, fettered, and fast bound ; it requires time to recover, pass through a state of convalescence, and regain its strength and liberty. God's graces in a conversion are bestowed, according to the ordinary law of his providence, gradually : they work for some time to finish the change. They first excite the will ; then raise it higher, and lastly complete the thorough reformation. God can convert the most criminal soul in a moment : we have examples of such conversions in holy Scripture ; but all miraculous in grace. In the common course of things, the first motions are only desires, half wills, small efforts. In many hasty confessions of mortal sin, these are mistaken for real changes, and pass for repentance. Hence false conversions and relapses are so frequent. Vicissitudes of rising and falling are unknown among true penitents, according to the constant doctrine of the Fathers of the Church.

Penance does not make a soul impeccable. Man is always frail and changeable. But the will cannot be turned from one extreme to another all at once. Repentance fixes the will strongly : grace is in possession, and cannot be expelled but by many struggles. The will is quite changed : the affections are removed from their darling objects to their opposites : the soul now hates sovereignly what she before loved and adhered to. In a word, the sinner is become another man, having put off the old man with all his acts and desires, and put on the new one, who is created according to God. Eph. iv. 33. No one certainly can imagine, that a person thus changed can easily fall back into sin. For the same will, alternately to abhor sovereignly and to embrace immediately the same thing, is almost as plain an impossibility, as for it to love and hate the same thing at the same time. Our will commands itself, and cannot change but by its own free choice. It is an illusion for a man to say, that he had the will, yet did not do the thing when he had it in his power.

Nor is the case altered if he has relapsed through some ordinary occasion, which ought to have been foreseen and avoided, had the resolution been perfect. Did we ever see a man earnest in the pursuit of an affair, who did not study the means to compass it, and to ward off accidents and dangers ? A merchant putting to sea takes care to inform himself of, of, and to shun the rocks and sands to be met with in his voyage. Whosoever then relapses by such occasions, which he ought to have foreseen and prevented or armed himself against, or by ordinary temptations, had no effectual desire to avoid sin.

He imagines himself converted ; but we must be persuaded, that he deceives himself, and does not know his own dispositions. He mistakes certain ineffectual motions for a thorough conversion. He thinks he can best sound his own heart, and is the best judge of his own resolutions. But of all men on earth he is, in this matter, the most incapable. The bias of passions sways him, self-love blinds him, faint desires and half resolutions deceive him. We see in the example of St. Augustin, that a sinner may have very strong *velleities*, long before his heart is completely changed. But he will say, he is sure that now his resolution is perfectly

taken. He must however give us leave to answer him with the philosopher Seneca, ep. 112. ad Lucilium: "I do not say he lies; for I am persuaded he really thinks so: but bad men both love and hate their crimes at once. Let him then excuse us from believing him sincere, till the change of his life has convinced both himself and us, that he really is so."

It is only this actual amendment of life that can prove the sincerity of his conversion, both to himself and others, because this alone can distinguish effectual resolutions from mere desires. All other signs are sometimes equivocal. The same words and protestations are often used by the most hardened sinners and perfect penitents. Saul used as strong expressions to Samuel as David to Nathan. Sighs and tears are also treacherous and deceitful. Who would not be convinced by the lamentable sighs of Esau, Saul, or Antiochus, which yet touched not the heart of God? We have then no other certain rule to judge by but that laid down by our Redeemer: "Ye shall know them by their fruits." Matt. vii. 20. A man's works are the fruits of his heart. It is known and seen only in them. A change of life, constant holy manners, a dread and careful shunning of all dangerous occasions and a practice of penitential works, would show the heart new: but the heart can never be changed, whilst it continues to produce the same fruit. The sinner may have resolved and wept; but perhaps is not perfectly changed. Jesus knows his interior, and gives his grace of reconciliation only to the sincere convert. "Many believed in his name: but Jesus did not trust himself to them, for he knew all men." John xi. 24. "It appears therefore, but it is not really a repentance to often ask pardon for what we often commit," says St. Clemens of Alexandria, Strom. l. 2. p. 439. adding, that they, who relapse after penance, do not differ from heathens, except by a fuller knowledge of sin.

3. The unanimous tradition and practice of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church makes this truth incontestible. They are the channels through which we receive the waters of life, and the rules of virtue and salvation. We cannot then reject their authority in this point. Were their sentiments to be given at length, whole books might be copied out. Two short reflections will suffice to show us their principles on this important article.

Nothing is more frequently spoken of, or more manifest in Church history, than how cautious the ancients were not to expose our most holy sacraments to the profanation of sinners. Hence if any one, after having once performed canonical penance, had the misfortune to fall again, he was never admitted to it a second time, but remained excluded from the participation of the sacraments till the article of death, consigned to continual sighs and tears, preparing himself to receive only then the benefit of reconciliation. The reasons which they universally allege for this severity, are, lest sin should be encouraged by such lenity, false penitents admitted to the sacraments, and penance be done in vain, if a second time; for is it not enough to be once admitted? says Tertullian, de pœnit, c. 7. And St. Austin, ep. ol. 64. nunc 153. ad Maced, says: "It is cautiously and wholesomely provided, that place be allowed only once to that humble penance, lest a remedy by being too common should be less useful." St. Ambrose writes thus, l. 2. de pœnit. p. 436. "Those are justly reprehended, who think that penance ought to be reiterated, because

they are luxurious[a] in Christ. For, if they did penance truly, they would not think it should be afterwards reiterated, because, as there is but one baptism, so is there but one penance which is done publicly, and so of more grievous sins."

A second remark is, that, for fear of being imposed upon by false penitents, they never gave the benefit of reconciliation, even after the first fall, till the sinner had given proof of his sincerity by a long severe course of penances in humiliations, prayer, fasting on bread and water, lying on the ground, and other mortifications, longer or shorter, according to their sins. So much did they fear a relapse and want of a perfect conversion.

For, at St. Isidore says, l. de sum. bono, and from him the Canon law, Dist. 5 de pænit: "He is a scoffer, not a penitent, who commits what he repented of. Nor is he cleansed, who weeps for his sins, yet does not forsake them, but reiterates after penance what he wept for." They knew, that a conversion requires to will strenuously and perfectly: "Not to pass to and fro a half-wounded will; in which one side rising is struggling with the other side falling," as St. Austin says, Conf. B. viii. c. 8.

From these principles, in the tribunal of penance, a penitent is to be ordinarily believed the first time, if he has taken leisure, and used endeavours proportionably to his offence, except in violent habits which require a trial, or in sins of injustice, in which restitution is often most advisedly required before absolution. But in relapses, which have easily followed repentance, not only a trial is requisite, but former confessions are to be suspected, and carefully inquired into.

[a] 1 Tim. v. 11.

MORAL DISCOURSES

ON THE

SUBLIME TRUTHS AND IMPORTANT DUTIES

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

DISCOURSE I.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST IS THE ESSENTIAL CONSTITUENT OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN, AND OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE.

"THIS is everlasting life," says our blessed Redeemer, "that they know thee the only true God, and he whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ." To know God and ourselves is the whole science of the saints. It will avail us little to measure the heavens, know the stars, calculate their revolutions, explain the properties of all bodies, and all the secrets of nature, if it were possible, unless this knowledge be referred to the improvement of our knowledge of God and of ourselves. Without this foundation of all virtue, grace, and salvation, the most profound skill in the whole circle of the sciences, and the most sublime mysteries of theology, can only serve to aggravate our spiritual miseries and criminal blindness. This knowledge alone leads to salvation, heals our spiritual disorders, and puts us in possession of all the treasures of virtue and grace. By studying ourselves we discover our nothingness, spiritual blindness, weakness, insufficiency, sinfulness, baseness, passions, and disorders, with their cure; our dignity, advantages, and improvements in all virtues and graces. These are the subjects of our pious meditations, by which we are profoundly grounded in humility and compunction, and which are the foundation of all solid true virtue. The knowledge of ourselves is necessarily connected with that of God, so as to be perfected only by it. In the bright beams of his eternity, immensity, sanctity, and other infinite perfections, we more clearly discern and more intimately feel our own nothingness, and the depth of our wounds, and seek our only remedy and salvation in God.

The saving knowledge of God is not a mere confession of his adorable being and perfections, but a knowledge which gives the soul most enlightened conceptions, and penetrates the heart with the most feeling sentiments of his eternity, infinity, goodness, mercy, justice, and other attributes. This knowledge stirs up in us the most profound adoration and the most ardent love of God, the most awful fear of his sanctity, justice, and judgments, the most active zeal for his honour, and the most fervent perpetual fidelity in studying and obeying his divine law, and accomplishing most perfectly his most holy will in all things, and with the most vehement desire of the most perfect union with him in time and in

eternity. The divine omnipotence, omniscience, sanctity, justice, love, mercy, and other attributes are no where displayed in so wonderful and incomprehensible a manner as in the incarnation of God the Son. It is in the mysteries and sacred life of Christ that we attain to the most perfect knowledge of God, and of his wisdom and love. God is styled the Invisible, 1 Tim. i. 1, being in his own nature and attributes incomprehensible to all creatures. He is the infinitely perfect model, and the unfathomed abyss of all perfection and all sanctity. In our contemplation of his immensity we are totally lost in the depth of our nothingness, and unable to attain a height removed infinitely above our reach. We conceive virtue in him, and all attributes, so as to adore, praise, love, and fear his Majesty with sentiments which we are not able to express or frame conceptions of; and we study to copy his divine virtues in our own souls; but removed at a dread immense distance. God has been pleased to come out of himself by the incarnation of his divine co-eternal Son, to manifest himself to us in all his ineffable attributes in a manner accommodated to our weakness. Through his infinite condescension in this wonderful mystery, his omnipotence, wisdom, love, goodness, justice, and mercy are presented to us in such bright rays of effulgency, that, whilst our souls are overpowered by their unspeakable immensity, we seem in some measure to see and to feel them; so wonderfully are they communicated to our souls even by our senses. Christ is made man to show us the boundless riches of his divinity, and lead us to the possession of the same.

Christ came to give life to the world, which we can only receive by knowing him, by faith, hope, and love. "This," says he "is life everlasting." "This is the will of my Father who sent me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have everlasting life." John vi. 40. "He that believeth in me, hath everlasting life. I am the way, the truth, and the life." John vi. 47, 48. "I came that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly." The knowledge of Christ is the only means, by which we can rise from the spiritual death of sin, from the state of blindness and slavery of the law of our sensual appetites; the only means, by which we can receive the life of grace, exert its vital functions by the exercises of divine love, be enriched with the treasures of all heavenly virtues, be exalted to the dignity of children of God, and be enrolled in the book of life and the society of the saints. So precious a grace is it truly to know Christ by holy contemplation and love.

DISCOURSE II.

CHRIST THE SPIRITUAL LIGHT OF SOULS.

CHRIST comes the light of the world. The prophets from the beginning were sent by God to set up a light of divine faith, and revelation of a Redeemer, in the world. These were to the ancient just the greatest blessings and mercies. But they were only a kind of participation of the light; only borrowed rays derived from him, who is the light itself, the essential and original light, the eternal wisdom and truth, "who enlighteneth every man, who cometh into the world;" John i. 9; not only by the

light of understanding and reason stamped in his soul, but also by holding up to him the supernatural light of divine faith. All these were messengers of holy joy to the faithful loving soul; most dear and welcome to her heart. Their oracles are ever received and meditated on with the greatest veneration, love, and devotion. Yet in reading them she seeks him with greater eagerness, whom they foretell as to come; she is not satiated till he appears to her, and till she hears his voice. The precursor came, greater than all the prophets; his entrance into the world is accompanied with so many wonderful visions, revelations, mysteries, and miracles as raised astonishment in all men, insomuch that some mistook him for the Messiah. He pointed him out in the midst of the people; and showed all the divine promises, all the types, figures, and predictions to be accomplished in him. The nearer he approaches the light, the greater is the joy, with which his words fill our souls. Nevertheless, most welcome, most joyful as his coming and divine message is, my expectation and desire is but the more enkindled. Him I seek, him I long to adore, whom the Baptist announced: "He was not the light, but came to bear witness of him, that was the light." John i. 3. I revere and repeat with jubilation and adoration every oracle, in which the ancient saints saluted him in spirit with joy, and announced him to come; but I redouble my sighs till he comes in person to fill all my desires.

God "dwells in inaccessible light," 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16; is himself styled emphatically the light, Mich. vii. 8, being the infinite wisdom, reason, and justice, and the source and fountain of all reason. His co-eternal Son, subsisting consubstantial word, increated wisdom,—is in the same manner the light proceeding from the Father, light of light, true God of true God. *Symbolum Nicæn.* &c. He came into this world "to enlighten those who are seated in darkness and shades of death," Luke i.; to dispel the darkness of our ignorance of heavenly things, and to correct our errors. The prophets, the ministers, and preachers of his law, from the first patriarchs down to the last of the prophets, were lights to men to teach and direct them in heavenly truths; but were only shadows of Christ; their light was borrowed from him, who was sent the true light of the world from the Father. In him only shall we find all the light of heavenly truth, which will cure our blindness, the first obstacle to true virtue in our souls. Shall we hope to meet with it in the boasted schools of the ancient philosophers? Their pretended wisdom belies itself. Their doctrine is a mixture of light and darkness; of some great truths with much more extravagant folly; and their lives were disgraced and defiled by the most base vanity and pride, and in many by the most shameful lusts of the flesh. Rom. i. 24. When we consider their fatal practical errors, and the baneful poison of the passions, which often infected their hearts and actions, in what raptures of joy and gratitude do we turn our eyes to him, who is truth itself, and perfect wisdom and sanctity!

Shall we hope to meet with better information and maxims of wisdom among the wise, the men of wit and genius, or the great men of the world, the polite circles, or the modish philosophers of the age? All these are votaries of the idols of the world, slaves to ambition, avarice, sensual appetites, and other lawless passions; venders of all the false maxims, which form the code of that worldly wisdom, against which the gospel of Christ levels the thunder of its sacred and most dreadful anathemas, and to condemn and reform which Christ appeared on earth. The saints and just

are indeed lights of the earth, who by their example and doctrine trace out to us the path of truth and virtue, and direct us securely to walk in it. But this wisdom they received entirely from Christ; they only bid us follow them, because they follow him, who is the unerring light both to them and us. Ps. xxxiii. 6. Draw near to him and you will be enlightened. Keep your eye on him; keep your minds and hearts close united to him. In the brightness of his light, to be found by devout meditation on his sacred mysteries, life, and doctrine, you will walk securely in the light of the blessed, which he points out to you, together with the path which conducts thither. "He who follows me," says he, "walks not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

DISCOURSE III.

GOD IS OUR REDEEMER.

So boundless, so infinite, is the love of my God towards me, that he, the impassible, omnipotent, infinite, and eternal, was pleased for me to clothe himself with a mortal body, and be subjected to the greatest ignominies and contempt; to hunger, thirst, labour, and all the hardships of a severe poverty; and at last to buffettings, stripes, a crown of thorns, crucifixion, potion of gall and vinegar, and innumerable other bitter torments, and a most cruel death; to reproaches, scorn, being covered with spittle, kicked, bruised, and made the last of mankind and an outcast of the people; in a word, to all that hell could invent either to cruelty or contempt. Thus far did love overcome the omnipotent, and conquer the invincible. How does my God love me! can I, after this, ever doubt of his tenderness towards me!

He suffered all this for me, while I by sin was his enemy. A king that pardons a rebel, though it costs him nothing, shows great goodness for him; but for a God to suffer so much for rebellious sinful creatures argues no less than infinite love. Truly, to an excess does God love me, who, to redeem a slave, a base ungrateful creature, spares not his Son, nor does the Son spare himself. "No man," says our blessed Redeemer, "has greater love than to lay down his life for his friends." Yet, divine Redeemer, you had far greater in laying down yours for the most undeserving of enemies. That rule is true among creatures, though we rarely find an example of it amongst them; but your love exceeds all bounds, and knows no measure. Scarcely will one die for a just man; but you have died for the unjust, that you might justify sinners gratis, that you might make slaves your brethren, captives your heirs, banished criminals kings. How does infinite love here shine to the astonishment of creatures!

So did God love the world as to give his only Son. John iii. Who! the immense, immortal, independent, self-existent, and eternally happy in himself: the great King of glory and God of the universe. For whom! base ungrateful enemies and sinners. How much! it would have been a great condescension for him to have conceived a favourable thought of us; or to have sent an angel or archangel to visit us. But he sent his only co-eternal and consubstantial Son to take upon him the appearance of a

sinner, and to redeem us by his sufferings and death. Tell us how much he loved us; his love is unparralleled, infinite, and far exceeding all measure of bounds. How much then did he love us? So much. No other word could express it. So much, as to give his only Son for us. Ah, how much does this so signify! Stand amazed, my soul, and ponder well this short but expressive particle. Labour to make some return of love; and place the greatest confidence in him, who loved thee to such excess.

DISCOURSE IV.

ON GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

NOTHING happens by chance. God's providence governs all things, conducting them to the end for which they were created. He is not like an architect, who, when he builds a house leaves it to itself. No; he sustains and governs every thing that he has made. In him, we live, move, and have our very being. All things are from him, by him, and in him. Rom. ii. Every action, every circumstance, every accident, even every motion of a leaf is directed by him. Fire, hail, sea, and storms obey his voice. He clothes the lilies of the fields, and not a sparrow falls to the ground but by his order. My soul, how little hast thou always attended to this sweet and tender providence! Consider every thing as coming from, and ordered by him.

God has a particular providence over his elect. Every thing by his orders contributes to their good. Sickness or health, prosperity or adversity, poverty or plenty, all is sent by God for my greater good. To murmur at any thing is to rebel against God. If I take any medicine or potion from a skilful and loving friend, because I know he gives it me for my good, can I refuse to receive any thing from the hands of my God? He is infinitely wise, and knows what is best for me; he is infinitely good and loves me tenderly; he is omnipotent and master of all riches and graces; can I then fear that any thing can happen to hurt me? If he sends me sickness, persecution, or affliction, I will joyfully receive it, because it comes from his hands, and is designed for my good. If Job suffered, it was for his trial and merit. If Joseph was sold into Egypt, it was to preserve his whole family. So, if God afflict me, it is for my benefit. I will then always hope in him, though he were to kill me. If I were to die of famine and misery, or in torture and disgrace, his holy will be done; die once I must. Such a death would deliver me from this miserable life, and open to me the gates of heaven. I will throw all my solicitude on God; he will take care of me. His eye is always fixed on my wants, as they were on Daniel in the lion's den, and on the three children in the furnace. He can deliver me, if he see it for the best. The three children feared not the mighty king, having him for protector.

If I seek earnestly and in the first place the kingdom of God, all other things will be given to me. If God clothe the flowers of the fields, and feed the birds of the air, he will never abandon me in temporal, much less in spiritual wants. He has done so much for me, that he cannot now forsake me, and leave his work imperfect, unless through my great fault.

He will never permit me to be tempted above my strength, nor to be deprived of the means of grace. He is the good shepherd of my soul, who has laid down his soul for me, and by the greatest torments has procured for me eternal life. I live in the fold of this charitable shepherd, and am received into the number of his sheep. He feeds me with his own precious blood. He knows all his flock, and the wants of each; he loves them, and is entirely taken up in the care of them, constantly attentive over them to strengthen the weak, and seek those that are gone astray, to carry on his shoulders those that are languishing. O my soul, study to know and love this thy pastor. He is good and charitable; abandon thyself entirely to his conduct. He is wise; put a firm confidence in him. He is all powerful; obey his voice. He is just and holy; cast thyself entirely into the arms of his amiable providence.

DISCOURSE V.

A SERMON ON HEAVEN.

"And, therefore, now indeed you have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one shall take from you."[a] *John* xvi. 22.

THE apostles were seized with a deep melancholy and sadness when they understood, though imperfectly, that their divine Master was going to leave them, for whose sake they had quitted all they possessed, and foregone all worldly prospects of a livelihood, and by whose heavenly conversation they had now conceived so high a veneration and so tender an affection for his person, that to lose him seemed worse than death. "Let us go and die with him;"[b] John xi. 16, said one of them; for without Jesus's sweet company they could relish nothing in life. "Because I have spoken these things to you, sadness has filled your hearts."[c] John xvi. 6. And it must be a continual grief to any pious Christian amongst us to see that our heavenly spouse, our amiable Jesus has quitted us, and fled to heaven without so much as saluting us. "How came you to leave me without taking leave, when in brightest glory you ascended to heaven?"[d] St. Bern. Serm. 2, Ascens.; leaving us only mortification and sufferings for our portion, instead of those immense joys we were created for; still excluded from those happy mansions, encompassed by enemies on all sides, and hourly exposed to a thousand snares and dangers, and unavoidably obnoxious to sicknesses and innumerable miseries and anxieties; our bodies worn out with perpetual hurry and labour, our souls wearied with anxiety and fatigue. Our blessed Saviour, out of compassion for our desolate condition, promised he would not leave us orphans, or destitute of a Comforter; and, therefore, he has left us his holy peace, that calmness and tranquillity of mind, that resignation and confidence in his mercy, which

[a] Et vos igitur nunc quidem tristitiam habetis; iterum autem videbo vos, & gaudebit cor vestrum, & gaudium vestrum nemo tollet a vobis.

[b] Eamus & moriamur cum eo. [c] Quia hæc locutus sum vobis, tristitia implevit cor vestrum. [d] Quomodo me reliquisti insalutatum, cum formosus in stola sua Rex gloriæ in alta cælorum te recepisti?

far surpasses whatever pretended contentment the world can afford to its adorers; he also sends us his comforting Spirit, who, by his frequent consolations, gives us foretastes of what is prepared for us in heaven; but these are only drops allowed to our fainting souls, not to reward, but to encourage us. God here shows his sweetness only "in a flash, and for a moment."[a] St. Bern. de dilig. Deo. c. 10: "His stay is short, and he seldom comes;"[b] for the devil's envy, our own fault, or a busy world, soon draws us to earth again; and this, being only "a looking-glass and an inadequate representation,"[c] serves but to inflame our souls with a more languishing desire of being united to God immortally, and forces us to cry out with more vehemence: "Ah me, because my stay is prolonged!"[d] mourning that our exile is prolonged, continually to see our God derided by infidels, blasphemed by heretics; his precious blood sacrilegiously trampled under foot by those very Catholics, on whom he has so plentifully showered his most singular favours; and our country, once his chosen vineyard, become a prey to hell. "I heard a voice like that of a woman in labour; I heard her groans in labour. It was the voice of expiring Sion stretching out her hands. Ah me, I am ready to faint!"[e] Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in an instant; but here souls perish, and perish everlastingly. "If I cry for mercy, God has excluded my prayer."[f] Lament. iii. 8. Our fellow-creatures, so near and dear to us by all the bonds of nature, live deprived even of the knowledge of God's sweet yoke, and daily by thousands become the eternal butt of all the arrows of his divine vengeance. "I am exceedingly sad, and my heart is wrung with grief; for I wished to be an outcast for my brethren, who are my relations according to the flesh."[g] We find so many causes of sorrow concentrated in our breasts, too small to contain such great griefs, and no comfort except always to have before our eyes the eternal joys of heaven, as Christ, for our example, "with joy suffered on a cross, despising confusion."[h] If we look on those immense rewards already prepared by Christ, and now, as I may say, waiting for us, the world appears as smoke; all labours and difficulties vanish; this thought alone makes us superior to all dangers, and an overmatch for the devil's malice. O! could mortal hearts but conceive, did wretched worldlings, drowned in earthly pleasures, but know what and how great are the joys of heaven, how would they despise those fading vanities, and say with St. Francis of Sales: "I would not give a bending of my finger to have kingdoms at my back, to have the command or disposal of the universe!" To excite our sluggish tepidity, and encourage our desponding souls amidst all these difficulties, according to the words of my text, I design to say something of that blessed kingdom, and those rewards now laid up in store for us, as methodically as so ample a subject and my intended brevity will permit. First let us, from this vale of miseries, implore the intercession of the Queen of heaven. Ave Maria.

It would be the highest presumption, did I attempt to give a full description of the joys of heaven. St. Paul having been caught up to the

[a] Raptim & ad momentum. [b] Parva mora & rara bora. [c] Speculum ut in ænigmate. [d] Heu mihi quia incolatus meus prolongatus est. [e] Vocem quasi parturientis audivi, angustias ut puerperæ; vox filiæ Sion intermorientis, expandentisque manus; Væ mihi, quia deficit anima mea! [f] Sed et cum clamavero & rogavero exclusit orationem meam. [g] Tristitia mihi magna est & continuus dolor cordi meo; optabum enim egoipse anethema esse pro fratibus meis, qui sunt cognati mei secundum carnem. [h] Proposito sibi gaudio sustinuit crucem confusione contempta.

third heaven, and heard those secrets which it was never in the power of man to utter, assures us they far surpass what mortal hearts can conceive; "and that neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor has it ever entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those that love him." 1 Cor. ii. 9. We may, however, frame some imperfect idea of it, if we consider, that this is the glorious kingdom, which our great Creator has prepared to manifest the riches and extent of his goodness and power to his beloved servants, and in which he communicates himself in all his majesty, and with all the charms of his sweetness, to his chosen creatures for all eternity. As a great king performs whatever he undertakes in a noble and royal manner, becoming his dignity, so God does everything worthy of an infinite omnipotent author; even his punishments on the damned are such as no other could inflict; "Who alone does wonders."[a] Ps. lxxi. 18. Now love and mercy are the most transcendent of the divine attributes, as we may see in this, that from them alone proceed all the most astonishing mysteries both in the order of grace and nature. Love overcame an omnipotent God so as to make him become man, and die for us ungrateful creatures; let us hence form our conjectures of what it will prompt him to effect in the consummation of all the works of his mercy, and in manifesting the excess of his infinite goodness to his beloved creatures. In all his works he shows himself God; but in this he may be said far to surpass himself, as it far surpasses all his other works; for here his goodness and wisdom in suggesting and his power in effecting unite, and exert themselves to the utmost. We admire the beauty, splendor, magnificence, and symmetry of each part of this world, which God created only to be the place of our banishment and sufferings; that infinite number of stars, and their surprising magnitudes; the sun a million times larger than the earth, and at the distance of sixty millions of miles and upwards; the stars still forty thousand times higher. Yet these immense bodies, in so different and seemingly opposite motions, are regulated in the most exact uniformity by that sovereign intelligence, who holds the universe in his hand, and weighs the earth as a grain of sand, and the sea as a drop of water. Hence drawing down our feeble eyes to the minutest objects, had we but senses quick enough to pursue the almost infinite divisibility of the least atom, or grain of sand, we should continually find new worlds; for the meanest object is a most delicate and wonderful machine, composed of a complication of numberless tubes and springs, divided and subdivided without end in admirable harmony and communication with one another. Yet this immensity of the universe, that variety of myriads of living creatures, with which each element—nay, even every particle of matter seems to be filled, serve only to show the bountiful hand of our Creator. But I omit the miracles of the creation; it is sufficient to say, that we are not able to discover the very outside of the meanest object. Yet how surprising do the effects and laws of nature seem even to us! If, then, Almighty God, by one simple act of his will, could have produced ten thousand worlds, each infinitely more perfect than this, what an exalted idea must we conceive of that glorious kingdom, where his omnipotent power will second his goodness in showing itself to the full? My soul here loses itself in amazement, and seems carried far beyond what she can express, or even conceive. The Holy Ghost, by the seraphic pen of St. John,

[a] Qui facit mirabilia magna solus.

Apoc., xxi. condescending to our weakness, who can only form our conceptions by what we see on earth, describes it as "a city paved with pure gold, pellucid as crystal, and shining like jewels; the walls of precious stones, and the twelve gates of twelve immense diamonds; that it has no night, no sun, no moon, but that God himself enlightens it, and the Lamb is its lamp; that it is watered by a river clear as crystal, overshadowed on each bank by the tree of life." St. John adds, that he saw this new Jerusalem descend from heaven, to show that the earth, renewed in a most glorious manner, would then join, and both together become a heaven to the blessed. No misery can enter here; dangers and fears are totally unknown; death and sickness are eternally banished these walls. Our bodies, which are now unavoidably obnoxious to a thousand miseries from inclemency of air and an infinity of accidents, so that they are a most troublesome annoyance and dangerous enemies, will be then incorruptible and impassable, and endowed with the properties of a spirit, as they are termed by the apostle *spiritual bodies*, insomuch that the whole universe will not be able to hurt them, and so strong that nothing can resist them. So great will be their agility and swiftness, that St. Augustin, Ser. 227, col. 118. T. S., compares it to that rapidity of light, than which we can conceive no motion swifter; "sooner shall the ray of thy light reach heaven than thy eye the nearest object;"[a] so wonderful their beauty, that the universe would appear deformed, if compared to one glorified body. "They shall shine like the sun."[b] Mat. xiii. 13. So bright will they shine and dart such rays of piercing glory; "they shall shine as lightning in the kingdom of their Father,"[c] Blos. monil., that St. Teresa, and other saints favoured with the visions of the blessed, declare, that the sight of one glorified body seems a sufficient felicity. Who would ever believe that this dull lumpish flesh, now subject to so many vicissitudes, should ever appear so glorious, and dazzle like lightning, did not the word of God so positively assert it? "And his countenance was like lightning."[d] Mat. xxviii. 3. Our soul is now clogged and imprisoned by this heavy flesh: "the body which becomes corrupt, and aggravates the soul,"[e] is subject to anxieties and an hundred irregular passions; her will is vitiated, her memory and understanding obscured in a total darkness, even of our present condition. But when freed from this body of death, and all her incumbrances, she shall be adorned with all natural gifts in the highest perfection; and by supernatural graces raised far above herself, she shall clearly see all things in their cause and source, viz., in God. "What can they be ignorant of who know him, that knows everything?"[f] St. Greg. l. 4. dial. c. 33. Her memory will be delighted in revolving past combats, &c. She will be omnipotent as to her own will, not being able to desire anything but what is also the will of God. Even our corporeal senses and each member of our body shall find its peculiar pleasure; our eyes shall always feed on the beauty of heavenly objects; our ears be charmed with melodious hymns of praise, which the happy choirs incessantly sing to their Creator, and so of the rest. We see here the most surprising wonders of nature effected by means in appearance very trivial: slender vibrations of the air cause all the wonderful effects of music and sound; a small different modification

[a] Citius radius tuus pervenit ad cælum quam palpebra ad supercilium.
[b] Fulgebunt sicut sol. [c] Fulgibunt sicut fulgur in regno patris eorum.
[d] Et erat aspectus ejus sicut fulgur. [e] Corpus quod corrumpitur aggravat animam.
[f] Quid est quod nesciant qui scientem omnia sciunt.

and separation of light produces that variety of colours, which make up the beauty and lustre of the universe; only a different configuration and texture of particles in lumpish matter effect all those riches of nature, which delight our sight, smell, and taste, and ravish all our senses. What incredible pleasures do we then imagine God has prepared for every sense? For we must consider, that he makes it his glory to show himself wonderful in his saints, and to manifest his infinite wisdom and love in making everything concur to increase their felicity beyond measure. Add to all this, the multitude of glorious companies in this never-fading felicity; the innumerable troops of virgins crowned with lilies, of martyrs bearing palms in their hands, of holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and other saints, each with his marks of victories, and the trophies of his multiplied triumphs: the thrones, dominations, principalities, powers, virtues, archangels, and angels, which make up that hierarchy of ministering spirits always assisting before the throne of God; the seraphim all burning with flames of divine love, and communicating the same to inferior spirits; the cherubim drinking from the fountain of wisdom torrents of knowledge and delight, which they again pour forth on others; but above all, the glorious Queen of heaven seated above the seraphim on a throne of glory. We shall there also behold human nature placed on the very throne of God; we shall see a God-man surrounded with all his charms, styling himself our brother and coheir, and plentifully showering down torrents of sweetness on his elect. What charms of love, what rays of glory and majesty will shoot from his divine heart, and fill the breasts of those happy redeemed souls! How will his virgin flesh and shining wounds dazzle our feeble eyes! St. Teresa (her life, c. 28,) having in a vision seen but a glimmering of his sacred humanity, assures us, that the sight of it surpasses all we can express. Let us here stop a little, and consider what an additional joy will all these glorious companions be to our felicity; to enjoy their sweet happy company, and intermix in their choirs. It is as great a pleasure to see those, whom we love as ourselves, partakers of felicity, as to enjoy it ourselves; so love will there make that of each happy spirit our own. It will be an unparalleled joy to see the infinite happiness, which God, whom we shall then love according to our full capacity, enjoys in himself; and to see so many millions, so beloved by God, in the same felicity, will overwhelm our hearts, too narrow to contain so many and such great joys. "What in this situation must be the ecstacy of the human heart, that empty heart, that heart now corroded with care, overwhelmed with misery? Consult your own feelings on a subject of such perfect happiness. If the heart of man can scarcely contain his own joy, what must he feel under such an accumulation of felicity?"[a] St. Anselm, Prolog. 25. Yet all, that we have hitherto mentioned, are no more than appendages and accidentals of that heavenly felicity, which consists in the clear sight and possession of God, in which is included all good; for it could not be termed "the sovereign good, the best of all possible good things,"[b] were any good found not comprised in this vision. If then the beauty of the

[a] Cor humanum, cor indigens, cor expertum ærumnis imo obrutum ærumnis; quantum gauderes si his omnibus abundares? interroga intima tua si capere possint guadium suum de tanta sua beatitudine?—Si cor hominis de tanto suo bono vix capiet gaudium suum, quomodo capax erit tot ac tantorum gaudiorum?

[b] Summum bonum, bonorum omnium summum.

universe, if the pleasures we meet scattered in created objects delight us, what shall we imagine of the full possession of all good in its source, from which all other perfections are but small emanations? "If you are delighted with things, which scarcely deserve the name of blessings, what raptures must be excited by the contemplation of that unchangeable, unceasing felicity?"[a] St. Austin in Ps. 26. Why then do we divide our affections, wandering after so many objects, seeing that by God's infinite mercy we were created for so great a good; especially it being his eternal law, that no smaller good can ever satiate us? "Woe be to that presumptuous soul, who seeks happiness any where but in God. Turn on every side; all is vanity and affliction, and in God alone shalt thou find repose."[b] St. Aug. conf. l. 6. c. 16. Let us then fix our hearts on this one great good, in which we shall meet with all we can desire. "God pervades every thing, governs every thing, possesses every thing; and out of him there is nothing."[c] Idem, solin. n. 4. Shall we so far debase our noble souls? "Shall the coheir of Christ associate with brutes? Raise thy mind and thy hope to the source of all good."[d] Idem, in Ps. 102. Let your pleasure be, whilst on earth, to contemplate the glorious mansions prepared for you. "Hear, daughter, and see; forget thy people and the house of thy father, and the King shall court thy beauty."[e] Behold the magnificence of that heavenly city lying, &c. under thy feet, and cry out to the king thy spouse: "Show me him, whom my soul loves. Where dost thou feed; where dost thou repose at mid-day?"[f] Take thy flight in imagination, at least, through those lucid mansions; intermix with those happy citizens, and admire the cherubim, but boldly say: "Let it be fiery, though 'not fire itself';'[g] I seek the source of their happiness and glory; approach the throne gradually, and cry out: I have found him whom my soul loves. My beloved to me and I to him, who feeds amidst lilies."[h] Cant. iii. 4. Are we not transported beyond ourselves as often as we think of this? Yes, we shall see God face to face, says St. Paul, having been caught up to the third heavens: we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is in himself. For St. John, though favoured with the sublimest visions, could express no further of it; 1 John iii. "He spoke what he could, the rest must be felt by the heart."[i] Our souls, elevated in their own capacity, by the "light of glory,"[k] shall contemplate the divinity, and be by love transferred as it were into God, as iron in the furnace seems totally changed into fire. We shall here know all nature in its cause, and penetrate the mysteries of

[a] Si vos delectant bona, quæ non sunt bona, qualis erit contemplatio incommutabilis boni eodem modo semper manentis?

[b] Væ animæ audaci quæ speravit, si a te recessisset, se aliquid melius habituram; versa & reversa in tergum, & in latera, & in ventrem, & dura sunt omnia, & tu solus requies.

[c] Deus, sub quo totum est, in quo totum est, cum quo totum est, extra quem nihil est.

[d] Cohæres Christi quid socius est pecorum? erige spem tuam ad bonum bonorum omnium

[e] Audi filia & vide; et obliviscere populum tuum, & domum patris tui, & concupiscet res decorem tuum.

[f] Indica mihi quem diligit anima mea, ubi pascas, ubi cubes in meridie.

[g] Ignita sit, non ignis.

[h] Inveni quem diligit anima mea. Dilectus meus mihi & ego illi, qui pascitur inter lilia.

[i] Quomodo potuit lingua sonuit, cætera corde cogitentur. [k] Lumen gloriæ.

grace; we shall see, St. Tho. in 4 dist. 46, and 2, a 5, the eternal generation of the Son, the ineffable procession of the Holy Ghost, and be inflamed with their infinite love. The three divine persons have loved each other from all eternity; our intellect will always feed on the divine attributes, and always discover fresh subjects of joy and admiration in that endless ocean of perfection. God will by this vision communicate to our souls such raptures of love and joy, such torrents of pleasure as cannot be conceived. Filled brimful and inebriated with delights, those happy creatures sing; "nor do they cease night or day to cry out: Holy, holy, holy."[a] As birds in the sky fly up and down, encompassed on all sides by the air, so are they in the divinity; the divine sweetness totally overspreads them, and pierces their very marrow; every part both of body and soul will enjoy incredible pleasure. As a man, drowning in the sea, stretches out his hands and feet on all sides; but meets with nothing but water, so they in an ocean of sweetness find no end of pleasure. "There shall be joy within and without, over and under, on every side; thou shalt rejoice in every thing, and for every thing. The consideration of this future felicity fills me with admiration."[b] St. Bonav. l. de 4 exercit. c. 4. But all we can say or conceive falls infinitely short of what heaven is: "We cannot explain it; but our joy will not suffer us to be silent."[c] St. Aug. in Ps. 102. Let us then by hymns of jubilation pour forth the transports of our hearts. "Let all the earth rejoice in the Lord; let your tongues sound forth the excess of your joy; proclaim aloud your felicity."[d] St. Gertrude assures us, that, while the anthem, "I saw the Lord face to face,"[e] (Div. ins. l. 2. c. 22,) was sung, the divine beauty penetrated her soul through and through, so that the joy crowded on her body, and, as it were, annihilated her very bones and marrow through excess of pleasure and sweetness, of which no tongue could express the least part. The same do all saints assure us of God's sweetness even in this life. "The saints conceive but a small portion of this abundance, and yet they speak of it with the utmost astonishment."[f] St. Bonav. Serm. 10. in pent. Though here our divine Spouse shows himself only "as in a looking-glass, and in a faint representation."[g] No wonder that the saints earnestly sighed to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. Tears "were my food night and day, while I am every day asked, where is thy God?"[h] And only the will of God, and to promote his honour, made life supportable to them. "I am straitened on every side, desiring to be dissolved and to be with Christ. But it is my lot to remain in the flesh for your sake."[i] Phil. i. 23, 24. Let us at least pant after it, being weary of our banishment. Thy desire of future happiness is incomplete, if thou dost not ask it daily with tears. You have not a proper

[a] Nocte & die requiem non habent dicendo, Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus.

[b] Gaudium erit intus & extra, subtus and supra, circum and circa; gandebis igitur in omnibus & de omnibus--jam futurum gaudium aspiciens præ admiratione deficio.

[c] Ecce dicere non possumus, & præ gaudio tacere non permittimur.

[d] Jubilate Deo omnis terra; deferte vocem ineffabilem gaudiorum vestrorum; eructate in eum lætitias vestras.

[e] Vidi Dominum facie ad faciem.

[f] Hujus abundantiæ vix scintillam capiunt sancti, and tamen eructant nobis mirabilia.

[g] Per speculum and in ænigmate.

[h] Fuerunt mihi lachrymæ panes die ac nocte, dum dicitur mihi quotidie, ubi est Deus tuus?

[i] Coarctor e duobus desiderium habens dissolvi and esse cum Christo; multo magis melius, permanere autem in carne propter vos.

idea of it, if any thing in this life can afford you comfort."[a] St. Bern. Serm. 2, in jejun.—St. Teresa, Medit. O death, I know not who can fear thee, the gate of life! When will our soul break this tedious prison, to mount above the stars? When will that happy moment come, which will shut the eyes of my body, by which I see vanities, and open those of my soul to behold God and his saints? What a pleasure will it be to extend her imagination in the endless labyrinth of eternity, to behold herself in security, and look down on earth, and see others fighting manfully amidst many shipwrecks? Oh were that hour come, whither would the joys of heaven have now carried me! At present we eagerly pick up the crumbs of sweetness, which fall from that divine table; and even these the hurry of a busy world, the envy of the devil, the frailty of nature, or God himself for our trial soon deprives us of; but then how will our weary and hungry souls cleave to that fountain of sweetness to satiate their thirst! How will they plunge themselves in that ocean of pleasure, just as a hart tired by the dogs throws himself into a clear river so eagerly, that one would think he sought to be turned into water, the better to enjoy the coolness of that element; but narrow hearts are not able even now to contain themselves at the very thought of this. "I doubt not but such is the happy condition of souls in heaven. I conceive but little of their happiness, but even that little I am unable to express."[b] St. Bern. Serm. 2, in Cant. We now say in hope: "Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God;"[c] but shall then sing: "We now see every blessing, which was ascribed to thee."[d] God says to us: Labour a little, and you shall find eternal rest; and amidst your labours I afford you many consolations. He now discovers himself frequently as it were behind the wall. "Behold he stands behind our wall, looking through the windows and through the rails;"[e] but will not fully satiate the soul. "Turn aside thy eyes, for they have made me shrink away from them."[f] Then his glory will not dazzle my eyes; "I shall then steadily fix my eyes on thy glory without being oppressed. On the contrary I shall imprint myself upon it."[g] St. Bern. Serm. 62, in Cant. These foretastes serve only to inflame beyond measure the longing desires of a love-languishing soul. St. Francis of Sales, Love of God, c. 15, says: For it is impossible, that a soul, that has once tasted divine consolations, should live in the world without continual pain and languishing. St. Francis Xavier often said: "For pity, O my God, overwhelm me not with the abundance of thy sweetness; or if through thy goodness thou wilt make me overflow with delights, take me to thyself." A soul, that has once tasted thee, must mourn her banishment in bitterness till she enjoy thee. "Even we, who have but a foretaste of spiritual joy, groan within ourselves."[h] Let us then regard ourselves as banished men, and dead to this world; "I am a sojourner on earth,"[i] Ps. 118; and sigh after our

[a] Futura gaudia non satis concupiscis si ea quotide cum lachrymis non postulas; minus tibi nota sunt, si non timuit consolari anima tua donec veniant.

[b] Sic esse in cælo non ambigo, ut lego in terris, ni quod ista exprimere non sufficio.

[c] Gloriosa dicta sunt de te, civitas Dei. [d] Sicut audivimus sic vidimus.

[e] En ipse stat post parietem nostrum; respiciens per fenestras, prospiciens per cancellos.

[f] Averte oculos tuos, quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt.

[g] Non me opprimet gloria ista totis licet viribus in se intendentem; ego potius imprimar illi. [h] Quin and nos ipsi primitias spiritus habentes intra nos gemimus.

Incola ego sum in terra.

heavenly Jerusalem. The Jews in Egypt in and the captivity were types of our banishment in this vale of miseries; let us then sit on the waters of this Babylon, and weep till we enjoy our crown. Can a banished man forget his country, or a labourer his wages? though he could, I will sooner forget my right hand than thee, my dear Jerusalem. It is but the thin half broken wall of my body and a few moments, which stop that ocean of delights from overwhelming my soul. "O moment at once short and long, how can the time be short, which separates me from my God? The word of God must be true. Yes, this short moment is very long, too long for my wishes, but much too short for my merits."[a] St. Bern. Serm. 74, in Cant. Let us thank God, that he has created us for so noble an end, and given us still time to secure and increase this our reward: St. Aug. St. Chrys. l. 1. ad Theod. Let us not murmur or complain under labour or difficulties, but always seek new toils for God's honour and glory; were we to suffer a thousand deaths a day, for a thousand years, it would all be nothing, nor hell itself for some time, to gain so immense a crown. God exacts not a million, nor even a thousand years' labour; and can we think it much for an eternal kingdom, which deserves, if possible, an eternal labour? Let then heaven be our hope; "rejoicing in hope."[b] Love will make us trample on all difficulties, and despise the world's vanities; it flies, it runs, and it rejoices;[c] it regards all as nothing to enjoy its object; and whatever hardships occur serve only to inflame it more, to burst through them, as a raging fire is not stopped, but increased beyond measure, when it meets with stubble. "Love is strong as death. "Its lamps are lamps of fire and flames. The waters have not been able to extinguish charity, nor shall rivers overwhelm it. If man could purchase love by the loss of all he has, he might still be said to have procured it for nothing."[d] Cant. ix. 6, 7. This will make life appear short and as nothing; it will make all difficulties vanish and sweeten all labours. Love would not choose heaven, if possible, without labour. What a monster would that creature be in heaven, that came thither by a way different from that which Christ and all the saints have walked? Love rejoices, the more opportunities it finds to suffer for the sake of its spouse. It is this, that will give a heaven on earth by its sweetness in this life, and bring us the everlasting enjoyment of it after death, an happiness, &c.

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION.

1. RELIGION is a moral virtue, which commands and pays to God that worship, which is due to his sovereign Majesty for his supreme excellence.

[a] O modicum & longum, O modicum longum! modicum dicis quod non videbimus te? Salvum sit verbum Domini mei; longum est and multum valde nimis; verumtamen utrumque verum, & modicum meritis & longum votis.

[b] Spe gaudentes. [c] Volat, curriti & lætatur.

[d] Fortis est ut mors dilectio; dura sicut infernus æmulatio. Lampades ejus, lampades ignis atque flammarum. Aquæ non potuerunt extinguere charitatem, nec flumina obruent illam. Si dederit homo omnem substantiam suam pro dilectione, quasi nihil despiciet eam,

It is the first, the most noble, and the queen of all virtues, as St. Thomas and all divines unanimously observe. Lactantius, Inst. l. 4. c. 28, derives the name Religion from the Latin word, *religo*, to bind, because it binds us to God; which is a tie more strong, more sacred, and more indispensable than that of any other virtue, such as piety towards our parents, or justice towards our fellow-creatures. The word piety often signifies religion; but it is more general, as it is applied to the duty of children to their parents, no less than to that which we owe to God. From the dignity, merit, and obligation of religion it necessarily follows, that a transgression against it, in any point of movement, is more grievous than a sin against any other moral virtue.

2. The motives, which recommend to us the exercise of the virtue of religion, are the most pressing, whether we consider those, that are drawn from the supreme dignity of God, those drawn from ourselves, or those drawn from the obligation, excellence, and merit of the virtue itself. The first is the supreme excellence of the divine Majesty. For "He is alone." Job xxiii. 13. Whence he says: "I am that I am." Exod. iii. 14. In the same sense, "No one is good but God alone." Mark x. 18. "His name alone is exalted." Ps. cxlviii. 12. To think of, or to express his incomprehensible greatness, all eloquence is dumb, and every understanding faint. The angels in heaven never cease praising him, crying out: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts!" which we on earth ought incessantly to repeat, annihilating ourselves in the admiration of his adorable majesty. "To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen." 1 Tim. i. 17; offering to him the sovereign homage of all our thoughts and actions. "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and shalt serve him alone." Deut. vi. 13.

3. A second motive is our essential dependence on God, in whom we live and move. We can have nothing, we can do nothing, but in and by God. It is then most just, that we should give to him the homage of all, and employ our whole life and strength for him, and to glorify his holy name.

To this we must add the innumerable and unspeakable benefits which we have received, and every moment do receive from him, in body and soul; for every one of which we owe him the perpetual homage of our praise and thanks.

Again, we belong to God, and are his. "All souls are mine." Ezech. viii. 4. "All things, which are under the heavens, are mine." Job. xli. 2.

Another consideration is, that God is our last end. "He is the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Apoc. xi. and xxii. We are created to worship, love, and honour him. If we neglect this, we wilfully destroy the end of our being, and contemn so noble a dignity. Lactantius writes thus upon this subject: "Man, amongst living creatures, seems created upright, that he might be excited to the contemplation of his heavenly parent: he alone received the use of speech, that he might resound the majesty of his Lord. All things on earth are subject to him, that he might be subject to God, his Framer and Maker. If God would have man to be his worshipper, and on that account gave him so great honour as to make him lord of other things, it is most just that he should worship God, who has bestowed so great things upon him." *De ira Dei, c.* 13.

4. Other motives are, that God, who has forbidden this sovereign wor-

ship to be given to any other, has strictly commanded that it be paid to himself. Who can be so base, so ungrateful, and so insensible, as to transgress the positive, just, and necessary precept of so great a Lord, and so liberal and kind a benefactor?

Moreover, by baptism we solemnly bound ourselves to this obligation, and were incorporated in Christ for this end.

The eternal recompence, which God has promised to us, is also a strong spur to our sloth in this duty; it is proportioned to our fervour and assiduity, and so are the punishments prepared by him for those who shall be remiss in it. "Whoever shall glorify me, him I will glorify; but they who contemn me shall be ignoble." 1 Kings xi. 30.

5. The singular excellence and advantages of the practice of this virtue recommend it strongly to us. Nothing is more honourable, nothing more noble, nothing more just or more suitable to a created being. If it be great or desirable in the eyes of the world to serve a glorious, just, bountiful, and powerful king, to attend always near his person, and enjoy his presence and conversation, what is it always to enjoy this favour with God?

5. Religion is a virtue most meritorious in itself, and which sanctifies a man's whole life, and all his actions, making them all perfect sacrifices to God. Corporal austerities, or exterior virtuous actions, are of little value, unless sanctified by it. Whence St. Paul recommends it to his beloved disciple in these words: "Exercise thyself unto godliness. For bodily exercise is profitable to little, but godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. iv. 7, 8. By it a soul renews perpetually the consecration of herself to God; never ceases to adore him, and to sanctify his holy name; by her understanding forming in herself the highest idea possible of his immense greatness; by her heart and will, humbling and annihilating herself before God, and praising and magnifying him; by her tongue, offering him incessant sacrifices of vocal prayer; by her body, in exterior adorations; by all her actions, referring all of them to the divine honour.

6. The properties of the virtue of religion are a filial fear of God; a careful flight of sin and all dangerous occasions; an ardent zeal for God's honour; a perfect love or charity; a vehement desire of always advancing in the love and faithful service of God; a love and esteem for whatever belongs to the divine service; and a scrupulous exactness in it even to the minutest circumstance. An affectionate servant is attentive in the least things, which regard his master's service. Much more ought we to be attentive in every circumstance of our actions, that belong to the service of God. A spirit of religion is very solicitous not to neglect the least act of duty, remembering who he is to whom it honours, and labouring to give, in the least things, a proof of a boundless zeal to honour him. Thus, it makes a man exact and fervent in observing the least ceremonies and rubrics of the church in the divine office, because animated with this virtue he can look upon nothing small, in which the service of God is concerned. His care and watchfulness, indeed, are still greater in matters or precepts of a higher nature; but his intention and fervour suffice to give a great value to the lowest actions he does: for God chiefly considers the heart in everything.

7. The perfection of religion is, to worship and serve "God out of pure love and zeal, for his own sake. God will be worshipped gratis, and loved gratis, *i. e.* chastely, not because he gives anything out of himself, but

because he gives himself," says St. Augustin, in Ps. lii. Nothing can be an act of religion, unless it be done from the proper motive of that virtue, with the most humble subjection and total sacrifice of the soul to God, and in acknowledgment of his supreme majesty and excellence. For which reason the learned Suarez takes notice, l. 1, c. 9, that if a person heard mass on a day commanded, solely out of obedience to the precept of the Church, it would be a mere act of obedience, not of religion, which essentially requires at least a virtual intention of worshipping God for his supreme grandeur and omnipotence.

To understand the words employed in the definition of religion, it is to be observed, that honour is a confession of another's excellence: glory is an extended reputation with praise: worship is the testimony of another's superiority, and of the submission of ourselves to him. Hence a king may honour, but cannot worship his nobles. The supreme worship appropriated to God alone is called by the Greeks *latria*—a word applied only to God in the New Testament and the writings of the fathers. That inferior worship, which is paid to the blessed saints and angels in heaven is called *dulia*, as Bede observes in cap. 4, Lucæ. St. Austin takes notice of the same, l. 10, de civit. c. 1, where he says that the worship due to a creature is not called *latria* by the apostle, Ephes. vi. 6, but by another name; which is in that place *dulia*. To honour in the saints their intrinsic perfections is their inferior worship of *dulia*, which is distinct in its species from the act of religion: but it is a worship of religion, if the sovereign majesty of God be honoured in them.

8. Religion is an universal virtue, which offers to God and sanctifies all our other actions and virtues. These, if offered to God, and performed with the intention of worshipping him, and as homages to his supreme excellency, are, by this act, made acts of religion. Hence, this is called by the fathers the foundation of all virtues. "Piety towards God is the beginning of understanding. Piety is the foundation of all virtues," says St. Ambrose, l. 1, offic. c. 27. The word *piety* is, on this account, often used for all virtues; and we call a virtuous, true Christian religious. "We say that he only, who is pious and religious, is a true Christian," says St. Clement of Alexandria, in Paræsesi ad gentes. For a man, adorned with religion, sacrifices his heart and all his actions to God, and his whole life cannot but be devoted to God, and filled with all suitable virtues and good works, which will each be enhanced and ennobled by the additional dignity and merit of religion that accompanies them. This is also a virtue which has no bounds. It is founded on a law of justice, to pay to God the homage we owe to his sovereign dignity; though, as no strict justice can intervene between God and creatures, it is not a proper or perfect justice: whereas creatures can never pay to God a homage proportioned to his greatness, or perfectly honour him as he deserves to be honoured. Religion, however, applies itself to the utmost capacity of our soul, to honour him on earth, whom the blessed in heaven can never sufficiently honour by their incessant praises, and it borrows the succours of all other virtues, to pay what it owes to its sovereign Lord. A zealous soul adds to every action the merit of charity and religion, referring both to the love and honuor of God.

9. The proper acts of religion are those that contain a protestation and acknowledgment, which man makes of his subjection to God, as his sovereign Lord, and those by which we serve him as our Lord, and obey him as our Father. St. Thomas counts two interior acts

of religion; devotion and prayer. These are the principal and most excellent. The following are exterior acts of religion: they only belong to religion, as they are referred to the interior: adoration, sacrifice, oblation of first-fruits, gifts, and tithes, a vow, an oath, adjuration, divine praise, and thanksgiving. For there are three kinds of goods, which man dedicates and subjects himself to God by offering; viz., those of the soul, which are spiritual, by adoration, devotion, prayer, vows, and lawful oaths; those of the body, which he subjects to God by exterior acts of adoration joined with the interior, as genuflexions, prostrations, &c.; and lastly, exterior goods, of which he is the master, and which are offered to God, either immediately, as in the sacrifices of the old law, or remotely, as when they are given to his ministers, considered as such.

10. Devotion is a readiness of the soul in all those things, that belong to the divine service. Prayer is a raising of the mind to God with the petition for things suitable. Adoration is the humbling of ourselves both in mind and body before the sovereign majesty of God. Sacrifice is the supreme exterior homage paid to God, in acknowledgment of his sovereignty instituted by him. Gifts, first-fruits, and tithes are offered to God in his ministers. A vow is an act, by which we promise and consecrate to God any good work, which we afterwards acquit ourselves of. A lawful oath is an act, by which, compelled by urgent necessity, we with the highest reverence call God, as the sovereign truth, to witness some truth certainly known by us. Adjuration is an act, by which we earnestly ask of God some good for our spiritual advantage and for his divine honour, by his infinite goodness and mercy, by the passion of his Son, &c. The praise of God is an act, by which we celebrate him for his infinite perfection and wonderful works. Gratitude is the returning of thanks to God for his benefits.

11. But all our actions and other virtues may be made the subjects of this virtue, by being offered to God, and performed for the motives of religion. Religion ought to be the principle of our whole lives; we ought only to live and breathe to God. Hence alms-deeds, and all other virtues, will, by being offered to God as homages to acknowledge and honour his supreme excellence, have, besides their own merit, that of religion. Whence St. James, i. 27: "Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world." The same motive will make our ordinary actions, every step we take, and every motion of our heart, perfect sacrifices to honour God, to procure new graces, and obtain fresh crowns of glory in his everlasting inheritance. "If eternal life were to be sold," says St. Clement of Alexandria, speaking of this virtue of religion, (Paræn. ad gentes,) "at how great a price should we offer to buy it?" How fervent ought this reflection to make us in the practice of the acts of religion, to honour God more on earth, and to enlarge our happiness and love for an eternity of bliss? Every act of religion will be the greater, as it is performed with the greater sentiments of the annihilation of ourselves before God, and of glorifying his sovereign majesty and greatness with all our affections, and with our whole strength.

12. God is not content with mere exterior worship, as bowing, kneeling, &c. "True adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and truth." John iv. 23. Without this interior, all the exterior is hypocrisy and farce. Where that interior charity is wanting, whatever is done outwardly in

sacrifices and prayers is useless, and like stage-representations; and God is provoked to anger, not appeased by them," says St. Austin, Enchir. "God is a spirit, and they that adore him, must adore him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 24. He has given us a spiritual soul, only that we might know him, and pay him a spiritual homage. This the sacrifice of the new law peculiarly points out,—to this the exterior sacrifices of the old law directed.

God made this virtue of religion the basis of all his laws to man, and the first of his commandments. "Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and shalt serve him alone." Mat. iv. 10. Ah! was it necessary that God should command me, by an express positive law, to adore him? Is not the voice of nature, and his essential dependence on and infinite obligations to his Creator, and his Lord's infinite sovereignty, sufficient to move a rational creature to comply with this first of all duties?

DISCOURSE VII.

ON FAITH.

1. FAITH is a theological virtue, by which a soul believes firmly all the truths that God has revealed, upon the motive of his divine revelation. It is a theological virtue, because its immediate object is God, or his divine revelation. Its principal function is to honour God as the first truth. His holy providence could have given us a clear view of himself and his mysteries in this mortal life; but then we should not by such a knowledge have made him so honourable an acknowledgment of believing him to be the sovereign truth, and of humbling and subjecting our reason to it, which is the homage we pay him by an act of faith. Reason is a man's greatest prerogative; it is by it he principally excels brutes and the rest of this lower creation. He is himself sensible of this, and therefore, makes this privilege the greatest object of his inordinate pride. We, by faith, make to God the entire sacrifice of it, confessing that our lights are all darkness, and annihilating them, when God speaks. This is a great and an honourable homage, which we pay to God, as often as we repeat any act of faith. It is likewise a humiliation of ourselves before God, and a sacrifice of that which is most noble in us. "Blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed."

2. Faith is the belief of truths, that are proposed to us with some obscurity. "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not." Heb. xi. 1. It is called the substance and the evidence, because by its absolute firmness and certainty we already possess and hold the goods to come: but then, it is of goods which are yet absent and invisible to us. "Hope, that is seen, is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for?" Rom. viii. 24. If it were grounded upon evidence, how would it be free? Where would be its merit, its excellence, or its sacrifice? Therefore, has Almighty God been pleased to conduct us by authority; but by an authority the most certain and irrefragable; by an authority which reason itself commands us to subject our understanding to, reason which meets with mysteries in every object on earth, and work of nature. "You

calumniate invisible things," said St. Hilary to the Arians: "I ask of you a reason of those that are visible. Content to own your ignorance in your own concerns, you are insolently curious and presumptuous in those of God." When the heretic Eunomius pretended to fathom the bottomless abyss of the divinity, St. Basil desired him, before he put such a question, to explain to him only the nature of an ant. ep. 168, p. 629. Nothing is more worthy of the infinite greatness of God, than that his mysteries are incomprehensible to us, and above our reason, though never contrary to it. And nothing can be more just than that we should believe the divine revelation. We are governed by authority and belief in natural things, when we do not see them, as St. Austin elegantly shews in an express book on this subject, l. de fide rerum, t. 6, p. 145; and shall we not acquiesce in the assurance of eternal truth? The testimony of God suffices to silence all human reasoning, and to stop its idle curiosity. St. Chrysostom, having explained how Christ is co-eternal with the Father, cries out: "You will say, how can this be, seeing he is the Son? We speak of God, and do you ask, how? And do you not fear and tremble? If any one were to ask you, how the soul and body re-united will enjoy eternal life, you would laugh at the question; because our mind is not to inquire, but to believe, and not to examine a thing, the demonstration whereof is the power of him who affirms it. Why do you search into things which cannot be fathomed? Why do you inquire into matters which do not fall under our faculties or inquiry? Search the original of the rays of the sun; you cannot discover it, yet bear the weakness of your understanding. Why are you bold and rash in greater things?" &c. St. Chrysos. hom. 7, at 6, in Joan. ed. Montf. p. 45, 46, t. 8. "Nothing is worse than to pretend to measure divine things by reason, says the same St. Chrysostom, hom. 2, in 2 Tim. p. 69. "For so a man surely falls from the foundation of faith, is thrown afloat, and forsaken by the light. If a man, who would fix his sight upon the sun, will be so far from being able to see it, that he will lose his own sight, and also suffer much; far more will he do so, who boldly seeks to fix his eyes on the eternal light of God, and presumes to attain it by mortal reason." See him again hom. 13, in Matt. p. 175, 3, 7. "It is then the essential property of faith, to bring into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ;" 2 Cor. x. 5; and its chief disposition is humble simplicity, which far excels, in the eyes of God, all the pompous pride of philosophers, from whose hearts he conceals his holy truths and mysteries, revealing them only to the little ones. Luke x. 21. The reward of this obscure belief is the clear vision of God and of his great truths in the revelation of his glory.

3. The assent of faith, though obscure, is most certain, and more so than the clear truths or first principles of natural evidence. For, though the assent in these be most certain in the order of nature, that of faith is more firm, being in a supernatural order; produced by grace in the soul, and grounded more immediately on the sovereign truth of God. For, though reason and evidence draw all their truth and certainty from him their author; yet it is more impossible that God should deceive by himself, or by his own direct revelation, than by another, which is a means instituted by him indeed, but distinct from himself. "We have the more firm prophetical word: whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts."

2 Peter i. 19. The motive of faith is the word, or testimony and assurance of God, who is the supreme truth, and can neither deceive nor be deceived. All other things we believe, either upon the relation of our senses, which are often fallacious, or of our reason, so weak, short-sighted, and subject to illusion. But the certainty of faith is of a superior order, being founded on a higher motive, viz., on God himself. And where his testimony is sufficiently applied, it is a criminal infidelity not to receive it with a firm assent; for to hesitate, or to entertain the least deliberate doubt upon any one article, is entirely to lose the gift of faith, and to become an infidel. All the articles of faith resting upon the same motive, the testimony of God, to reject it knowingly in one is to reject it in all, and to believe by fancy, not by the rule of God's authority and revelation. "You who in the gospel believe what you please, and do not believe what you please, believe yourselves rather than the gospel," says St. Austin, l. 17, contra Faust. c. 3, t. 8, p. 307. Faith is always one, always the same, always unchangeable, as Tertullian observes, (l. de veland, virginibus,) and the same in all ages and times from Christ to the end of the world; for the Church cannot add one tittle to what Christ taught her.

4. The assent of faith is solely founded on the divine revelation, or the unerring testimony of God manifesting itself to us. Other conditions go before, and remove obstacles out of the heart, apply the revelation to us, and banish all rashness, or levity in our assent. These are called the motives of credibility; but are not properly dispositions to an act, which is supernatural. The principal of these are the evidence of the ancient prophecies; the confirmation of incontestible miracles; the sanctity of its sublime doctrine, and of many of its followers; the wonderful manner of its propagation, with the destruction of vice and idolatry; the troops of martyrs, who must have known its truth, especially the first of them, and who sealed it with their blood; the testimony of so many great men, doctors, philosophers, anchorets, virgins, &c., whose admirable lives alone must remove all possibility of doubt. Such a cloud of witnesses of every age, sex, and nation, persons of such great learning, probity, and capacity, who could not but be assured of what they testified, must shut the mouths of the most hardened unbelievers.

5. Faith is a supernatural virtue, and a special gift of God, infused into our souls by a particular grace, as St. Austin has composed whole books to show, and as the Church has defined in several councils against the Semipelagians, who ascribed the beginning of faith to ourselves. "By grace you are saved through faith. For it is a gift of God." Eph. xi. 8. "Unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him." Phil. i. 29. "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves: but our sufficiency is from God." 2 Cor. iii. 5. "If we are not able to think, certainly we are not able to believe as from ourselves," as St. Austin reasons, l. de præd. s. 35, c. 2. That virtue, which is the seed and the foundation of all supernatural actions, virtues, and life, must necessarily be itself a supernatural gift, and consequently cannot be acquired by the industry of nature without grace. "Whose heart the Lord opened, to attend to those things which were said by Paul." Acts xvi. 14. Hence, there can be no true faith in the devils or damned souls, which are stripped of gifts and graces, and retain no virtue, though they believe by the conviction of what they feel.

6. Faith is the foundation and beginning of a supernatural life. It is the root from which all supernatural virtues and good works, all the seeds of immortality, rise and are nourished. By it we receive the power of being made sons of God. John i. 12. By it we are born of God. 1 John v. 1. Christ attributes to it the remission of sins; the power of working the most stupendous miracles is also its effect. Mat. xxi.; Mark xi.; Luke xvii., &c. Abraham was justified through faith. All the patriarchs and saints pleased God, did such wonders on earth, and were saved by it. Read the enumeration made by St. Paul, Heb. xi. For charity and all other virtues are pushed up and draw their increase from it. We admire a great tree, its bulky trunk, its spreading branches, its numberless flowers and delicious fruit; and we see that all this wonderful glory of the earth is produced and nourished from its root. So it is in regard to faith; which is the plant from the seed, or rather the root, that produces and continually feeds all true virtues and sanctity of life. "Faith is the solid foundation of all virtues," says St. Ambrose in Ps. 40. And the same father cries out: "O faith, richer than all treasures! more excellent than all qualifications! more healing and sovereign than all physicians!" l. de virginibus, c. 3. We admire the confidence, the zeal, the charity of the saints; but let us remember, that the ardour of their faith gave to those virtues their birth and all their vigour. We are strangers to those happy effects, because we are so weak in faith.

Faith is the light, which directs us through the dark paths of this life to a glorious eternity; it was prefigured by that pillar of fire by night, and of a cloud by day, which conducted the Israelites through the desert into the land of promise; for it is a great light, but mixed with darkness and obscurity, and points out to us the happy land of the living.

7. The absolute necessity of holy faith unto life everlasting again recommends it. Without this virtue we love only the earth, we act only on earthly motives; we know only the earth and its false goods; we live only for the earth, and are, in our works, affections, and thoughts, altogether earthly. Faith translates us to a new life, and directs our hearts and actions to new and more noble objects, and makes all our works and affections supernatural, heavenly, and agreeable sacrifices to God. Unless we know and love God as the author of grace, and refer our actions to him in this quality, none of them can merit that glory, which is supernatural, and which can never be obtained but by virtues and acts of the same supernatural order. Hence, though an infidel may perform some moral good actions, as of alms out of fraternal compassion, or for God as the author of nature, he can do nothing profitable to eternal life without faith. "He that believeth not, shall be condemned." Mark xvi. 16. "Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him." Heb. xi. 6. The apostle makes this the principal subject of his epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. "The just man lives from faith." Hab. ii. 2.

8. Hence we learn the enormity of sins against faith, which, by destroying it in the soul, destroy the very foundation of justification and salvation. Such is the crime of infidelity, which is a denying the whole system of the gospel revelation, one of the most enormous and most pernicious of all sins, as it entirely separates a man from God, and from all true knowledge of him, his mysteries, and his holy law; though infidelity is

not of itself a sin, if it be invincible, that is, if a person could never come to the knowledge of God's revelation. Such a one, indeed, cannot be saved without divine faith; to which either God will bring him, or he will be damned for his original and actual sins. A similar crime is heresy, which is an obstinate error in matters of faith. For he, who obstinately denies one point, loses entirely faith, and believes the rest only by human persuasion. This is a sin next akin to infidelity. It is reckoned amongst the deadly sins, Gal. v. 19, 20; 2 Peter ii. 1; 1 John ii. 18; 2 John 17; Jude 12, 13. Saint Irenæus l. 3, c. 3, writes: "The apostles and their disciples dreaded this evil so much, that they would never have any commerce, even in words only, with those who had adulterated the truth. John, the disciple of the Lord, in Ephesus, going to bathe, as soon as he spied Cerinthus in it, leaped out of the bath without bathing, saying, he was afraid lest the bath should fall, whilst Cerinthus, the enemy of faith, was within." And Polycarp, his chief disciple, when Marcion one day met and asked him, if he did not know him, answered, I know you to be the devil's eldest son. The celebrated Middleton is indeed angry at this relation, but is not able to discredit it. Nor is it stronger than the apostle's words: "If any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house, nor salute him." 2 John 10. "What doctrine," says the ancient Vincent of Lerins, "but the Catholic, the universal, that which remains one and the same through all the successions of ages, by the unspotted tradition of the truth?" St. Paul says: "A man that is a heretic avoid, after the first and second admonition." Tit. iii. 10. But, as heresy is an obstinate error, this crime is not incurred, if the error be invisible. Whence St. Austin writes thus: "No one can doubt but that we are to give an account of our faith as well as of our practice, and that a wilful corruption of it, which has not the plea of invincible ignorance, must be a crime."

9. As a gardener gives his principal application to the roots of his plants, so the first care of a Christian ought to be to cultivate most diligently in his soul holy faith, the root of all virtues conducing to eternal life; for, the stronger and deeper and more lively this is, the larger branches and better fruit will be produced from it. It was by the perfection of their faith, that the saints were able to remove mountains. "By faith they conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, recovered strength from weakness, became valiant in battle, put armies to flight." Heb. xi. 33, 34. If a worldly spirit, disorder, and sin now reign so much among Christians, this calamity is owing to the want of faith. For, though they believe firmly, yet they are not penetrated with the great truths which they believe, and they are strangers to the impressions, which they ought to produce in their hearts.

How is our faith to be strengthened, and the source of so great evils to be remedied? The first means is, to beg humbly of God the gift of perfect faith; for it must be his grace. We must therefore pray with the apostles: "Increase our faith," Luke xvii. 5; and with the father of the boy brought to Jesus, possessed by a dumb spirit, who cried out with tears: "I believe, Lord; help my unbelief." Mark ix. 23. It is God who must open our heart to believe, as he did that of Lydia. Acts. xvi. 14.

We must, secondly, prepare ourselves to receive it by perfect humility, simplicity, and docility of heart. "For the foolishness of God is wiser

than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." 1 Cor. i. 25. It is always pride that begets apostates and heretics, and makes men curiously pry into what is above them. We stand not in need of curiosity after Christ's testimony, nor of inquiry after the gospel, says Tertullian, l. de præscr. If we are molested with temptations of infidelity, we must raise our hearts calmly to Christ by a firm act of faith and prayer, (e. g.) saying with Hugh of St. Victor: "Lord, if I am deceived, you yourself must have deceived me; for my faith is recommended by those signs, which can only come from you." Under the temptations, we must carefully avoid entering into any disputation with others, or within our own minds; for the devil is an artful disputant; and we, at such times, labour under a bias. Our arms must then be vigorous resistance and prayer. When our minds are calm, we may apply them with prudent advice to the proper motives.

10. Repeating frequent acts of faith is another essential means. Every virtue is strengthened by the fervent repetition of its acts. So must faith. By them, our hearts will relish more and more its mysteries, and grow daily stronger in faith; 1 Peter v. "In which shield they may extinguish all the fiery darts of the enemy."

Moreover, actual faith is an indispensable homage, which we owe to God, and a necessary condition of salvation, as all Christians agree. "You who fear God, believe him." Eccl. ii. Hence divines unanimously teach, that an omission of acts of faith, hope, or charity, is a mortal sin; First, when children attain the use of reason, the sacrifice and first-fruits of which they are bound to make to God by the exercise of the three theological virtues, so that the omission be not of any moral delay. Hence we see the particular obligation of parents and pastors to take care, that children before that time should have learned the chief mysteries of faith, especially the unity and trinity of God, and the incarnation of the Son of God, and also to recite their prayers, and with the greatest attention their age is capable of, that they may direct the first dawning of their reason to adore God.

Secondly, these acts oblige, immediately after any sin against faith, &c., to repair the injury done to God by it, and restore him our hearts. Thirdly, when any dangerous temptation against faith assaults the soul; and, fourthly, in any probable danger. For then a man is most strictly obliged to turn himself to God, to make him the sacrifice of himself by these supernatural virtues, and to arm himself with the shield of faith against the raging enemy. "This is the victory which overcomes the world, our faith." 1 John v.

Moreover, it is a most advisable devotion, always to form such acts with the greatest fervour, when we prepare ourselves to receive any of the sacraments; and on all Sundays and principal festivals; both to honour God by this indispensable homage of his divine worship; to sanctify our souls, which the exercise of these virtues does above any others; and to excite and nourish devotion in our hearts.

There is farther a strict precept, that these acts be so frequent and continual, that our whole life may be influenced and governed by actual faith, that a man may live by faith. Rom. 1. 17. For these are to be the vital acts of his spiritual supernatural life, as breathing is to the body. Whence the faithful are to be admonished never to forget them in their morning and evening devotions. "Faith is the beginning of human salvation.

Without this, no one can come to the society of the children of God; because, without it, no one obtains the grace of justification in this life, nor shall possess eternal life in that to come;" (says St. Austin, Serm. 38, de temp.) and the fathers call faith the root of justice and perfection.

11. The conditions, which are to accompany our acts of faith, are, first, that we profess explicitly the firm belief of some supernatural truths or mysteries, as, in the first place, that God is our supernatural end, and the author of grace and eternal glory. This fundamental article, with that of our redemption through Christ, ought to be assented to explicitly in all acts of faith; other chief articles ought explicitly to enter into them sometimes, as on the effects of the sacraments, when we receive them, or by summing up the principal mysteries that are revealed to us, which we do by reciting the creeds. We are to profess an implicit belief of all the other articles of our holy faith, and of whatever God has revealed to us by his holy church, which he has established as the pillar and ground-work of his truth, and the depository of his sacred mysteries and holy word. For we receive them from Christ, not as his apostles did immediately from his own mouth, but by the channel of his church. This we may consider in two distinct capacities; first, as it is merely an illustrious body of men, deserving credit by their succession through all ages, their sanctity, learning, sufferings, martyrdom, &c. Considered thus, it is an authority to heathens and infidels, leading them to the assent in our holy faith, and ranked among those arguments, which we call motives of credibility, that make infidelity inexcusable, even to reason and human prudence. "Thy testimonies are made exceedingly credible." Ps. xcii. 5. In this capacity the church recommends to us the holy scriptures and all the other objects of our faith, but is not itself one of them, being only an introduction to faith. It is considered by faith, when it is embraced in a second capacity, viz., as the unerring spouse of Christ, and the depository, sure guide, and teacher of all his holy truths, which it received from him and proposes to us, to be assented to by us, without any danger of erring, as she is under the guidance and influence of his divine Spirit, who has given us his assurance, that he will always direct and preserve this holy church, which he himself planted with his own hand, against all the powers of hell, to the end of the world, that it be always a safe pasture of truth and salvation to our souls, and that his holy worship shall be never defiled or banished from amongst men, whom he redeemed. We may consider the church in either or both of these capacities, especially the latter, when we assent to all that Christ has revealed to us by it.

12. Another essential condition in all acts of faith is the motive, on which we found our assent to them, which must be no other than the divine revelation or testimony, which is the act of the unerring will of God, manifesting his mysteries to us by some exterior known sign, as by prophecy. This revelation is applied to us by the external motives of credibility, and the testimony of the church; but none of those external motives are the ground of our faith. Its assent is solely and firmly grounded on the divine testimony or revelation. Hence to believe on the testimony of men, or even of miracles, would be only a human faith, and a natural assent. These natural motives may show us the revelation; but divine faith grounds its assent solely on the divine authority. This all Christians ought to be carefully instructed in: and for this purpose it is proper, that the motives should be sometimes expressed in the acts

of faith, and that we believe, because God has revealed it, who is the sovereign truth, and can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Although acts of faith are necessarily implied in every attentive prayer; we ought to make them often expressly, as by saying the creed; in the mean time dilating our hearts in pious affections of adoration, love, thanksgiving, petition, &c. Or we may sometimes recite the summary of the chief articles of our faith, with acts of adoration, sometimes of love, of supplication, or the like, repeated in our hearts at each article.

13. The fruits of the Holy Ghost contribute exceedingly to the perfection of faith, especially spiritual science and wisdom, which teach us to understand, relish, and penetrate heavenly truths, piety, and the fear of the Lord; which are the effects of mortification and assiduous prayer and meditation. The soul by receiving these gifts, lights, and affections, more abundantly, and by advancing in humility and simplicity of heart before God, grows every day more perfect in holy faith. The practice of good works is likewise a necessary and great means to increase our faith, as the disciples going to Emmaus were enlightened by doing. The exercise of virtue perfects the will to be docile to faith, and removes the obstacles, with which self-love and creatures fill it. The understanding is prepared for faith; both the powers of the soul are employed in an assent of faith, the will to command, and the understanding to form it. The understanding, I say, is prepared for faith, by considering the motives of credibility: for the study of these motives in a spirit, not of distrust and curiosity, but of humility and piety, will not diminish but increase the merit of our faith. We meditate on them only through a sincere desire to perfect this holy faith in our hearts, and out of a great love of its mysteries, "which fills us with peace and joy in believing." And though faith be obscure, yet the motives that lead us to it, have a sufficient evidence, and show that the testimonies of the Lord are most worthy of our belief.

14. The marks of a great faith, which are likewise acts tending to increase it, are a high esteem and love of it; an ardent zeal to defend and propagate it; the greatest abhorrence of heresy or voluntary error in it; a perfect and joyful submission to the church; a firm hope and confidence in God, like that of Abraham, who, ready by faith to sacrifice his son, still trusted firmly in the promises of God; Heb. ii. 7; a perfect charity and the most fervent practice of good works; a faithful observance of God's commandments. How do our lives deny the practical points of our religion, the contempt of the world, of riches, and pleasures, the love of crosses and humiliations, and the like? Are not we in our maxims and manners, a scandal to Christianity? A certain lady presented herself to St. Francis de Sales, to be received into his order of the visitation, and begged he would receive the abjuration of her heresy. The saint was surprised; but she answered: "I have always indeed professed the Catholic faith, but only by halves; for, till now, I always believed riches and pleasures a happiness."

DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE QUALITIES OF FAITH, AND ON THE CATECHISM.

1. FAITH is not lost by mortal sin. This virtue still remains in sinners, who have not renounced it by apostacy. But it is in them a dead faith, or, as divines say, a faith without its form or soul, which is charity; a faith which will never save men, as St. James has expressly asserted against one who pretended, from the great commendation which St. Paul had given faith, that it sufficed alone to salvation: but he meant an active faith, a faith that worketh by charity; Gal. v. 6. For he expressly declares: "If I should have all faith, so that I should remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." 1 Cor. xiii. 2. And St. James: "What shall it profit, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?" James ii. 14. He proves that Abraham and the other patriarchs were justified, not by faith alone, but by a faith which produceth good works. It is by them that we give the testimony or proof of our faith. "Show me thy faith without works; and I will show thee, by works, my faith." ib. v. 18. He compares such an inactive faith to the fruitless knowledge which the devils have of God. "Thou believest that there is one God. The devils also believe and tremble." v. 19. He calls it a dead faith: "Even as the body without the spirit is dead; so also, faith without works is dead." v. 26. Faith without works is, as it were, a lamp without oil, says St. Cyril of Jerusalem. St. Bernard writes of it: "You offer to God a dead gift. Do you honour him with a stinking present? Do you please him by becoming the murderer of your own faith?" Serm 24, in Cant. And St. Cyril of Alexandria: "If any one, after baptism, returns to sin, he, as it were, murders his faith within his own breast." In Malachi c. 4, p. 43.

2. Faith is the principle of all supernatural actions. Infidels may exercise, without it, certain moral virtues, which may deserve some temporal recompense in this world, as St. Austin says, de civit. Dei, l. 5, c. 12 and 15. God gave to the Romans the empire of the world, in reward for their ancient parsimony and virtue. But they can never merit any reward in heaven; for faith alone can raise them to a supernatural order, and to the dignity of meriting eternal life. On the other hand, faith without good works, will only serve to condemn us much more severely, as it makes our transgression more criminal and more inexcusable. It is in vain we call ourselves the spiritual seed of Abraham, or the disciples of Christ, if we practise not his precepts, and are not governed by his spirit. We dishonour God, disgrace the sacred name we bear, and profane the holy religion we profess. We owe both to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves, a suitable sanctity of manners, and a life conformable to our faith. God has done us the high honour, and shown us the unspeakable mercy of choosing us to be members of his church. Gratitude and obedience oblige us in a particular manner to live as his sons and servants, that he may not be offended by those, who are most of all others bound to love and honour him. "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your goods works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Mat. v. 16. We are bound to glorify God by our conduct and actions,

which if we neglect, we dishonour him by usurping the sacred title of belonging to his family. A certain great prince said to an unworthy relation, that he begged he would either change his name or his manners, at least not to affect his illustrious family with the infamy of his vices. So does God reproach Catholics, who are such in name only.

3. Such Catholics moreover disgrace their religion, and ruin their neighbours' souls. Every son of the church owes to it a zeal, and his best prayers, endeavours, and labours for its exaltation and propagation, for which he professes himself ready to suffer all manner of torments and death. How base would it be for a son to fight against his own mother, and this while he professed the most dutiful and sacred piety and obedience! This crime wicked livers in the church are guilty of. They injure, by their manners, that church of which they are members, and render fruitless, in regard to many souls, all the labours of many apostolic preachers; the pernicious influence of their example being far more prevailing than the contrary zeal of holy pastors. There are unnatural sons, who tear out the bowels of their own mother; they are unfaithful soldiers, who insult the banners which they have the honour to carry; they are ungrateful miscreants, who expose their father's mysteries, with which they are entrusted, to the jest, raillery, and blasphemies of his enemies.

We owe this edification of our manners, not only to the church, but also to the souls of all our neighbours. The force of example in all things is absolutely incredible; and every one is to watch over all his actions, lest he become in any of them a scandal or stumbling-block to his neighbour. We are all, as it were, lights placed in the candlesticks of the church: we are a spectacle to all, with whom we converse, and we diffuse an odour, either to life or to death. Did Christians universally practise and live up to the sanctity of their religion, there would not remain one unbeliever in the world. The beauty, the harmony, and the lustre of the church, resulting from the virtue of all its members, would be so strong and attractive, that no obstinacy could be able to resist it. The heathens of the Indies openly allege our lives as an excuse of their infidelity; and our erring neighbours, who regard our actions more than our words, take occasion from our manners to reproach our religion; unjustly indeed; but we to him through whom this scandal comes! We owe this duty to ourselves, and to our souls.

4. Wilful infidelity is a prodigy of obstinacy and blindness, as it resists the strongest motives and lights of reason, and this for human respect, or for the sake of singularity and pride, without having any plausible arguments to allege. But it is another prodigy, that any man should believe, yet detain truth in injustice, and live like a heathen. He stands self-condemned, and pronounces as many sentences against himself as he makes professions of his faith, which serve only to aggravate the ingratitude and malice of his guilt. Surprising! that the divine judgments, which he believes, should not awaken him; nor the knowledge of his obligations make some impressions upon his heart: that he should, with his eyes open, precipitate himself into so frightful a gulf. All our actions are seeds of eternity. The least of them will not lose its reward; Mat. x. 42; but will shine to endless eternities; Dan. xxii. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away." Mat. xi. 12. "What a man has sown, that he shall also reap." Gal. vi. 8. "He who sows sparingly, shall also reap sparingly: and he who sows in abundance, shall

reap also in benedictions of plenty." 2 Cor. ix. 6. If a merchant were placed in such circumstances, that he could acquire every moment new estates, how earnest would he be to lose no part of that precious time? How would he regret even the hours necessarily lost in sleep? "Alas!" cries out St. Bonaventure, Serm. 3. de ascens. p. 341, "with what pains does the countryman manure and till the ground for the fruit of one year! and we labour for eternal crowns, yet are slothful." If any one should tell us, and we believed him, that a great treasure was hidden in our garden, we would certainly use all our endeavours to find it out; and if we did not, it would be a sign that we did not seriously believe it. We may say the same with regard to heaven or hell. Was our faith such as it ought to be, we would not neglect this affair as we do. Nor should we snarl at providence, and turn ourselves into all the postures of impatience, when any affliction befalls us, if we truly looked upon it as a wise holy order of our merciful God, and a seed of immense glory.

5. We are bound not only inwardly to believe; but also exteriorly to profess our faith, placing our glory in it. "He that shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed, when he shall come in his majesty." Luke ix. 26. "With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 10. This our public profession is glorious and honourable to the divine Majesty, and an act of justice we owe to the truth. It is an exterior act of religion and faith. In these sentiments we are to recite our creed in public prayers with the greatest attention and reverence. But prudence is here necessary; for we ought not to publish God's sacred truths, where it would only expose them to the raillery of unbelievers, and give an indiscreet occasion to their blasphemies. But there are two cases in which we are obliged to make a public profession of our faith: First, if God's honour; secondly, if our neighbours require it. The first happens, if a Christian be called upon by any public authority, whether just or unjust, to give an account of his religion. For, to be then silent would be to be ashamed of Christ before men, to rob him of his honour, and to prefer the world to him. And this is clear from the doctrine of the church and the practice of the martyrs. The second case happens, if another be in danger of denying his faith, unless he be publicly encouraged or instructed, or of concealing his religion, whereby some scandal would be given to others, or an occasion to the infidels of more boldly insulting the faith. When nothing of this occurs, it is lawful to conceal our faith among its adversaries; provided it be not any ways denied, or any thing done even tacitly against it. It is likewise lawful to fly in a persecution, unless a pastor be obliged to reside for the comfort of his flock, &c., as appears from Christ's express words, Mat. x. 23. He himself fled into Egypt; and again, when the Jews were going to stone him. St. Peter fled out of prison, and St. Paul out of Damascus. Read St. Athanasius's apology for his flight, and St. Austin, ep. 228, ib. 180.

6. It is always a grievous apostacy to deny a man's faith by words or signs. It is an enormous crime even to use any such dissimulation, by which others will think a person has denied his faith, which was the sin of the *Libellatici* condemned by the Roman clergy, and by St. Cyprian, who obtained from the judges false certificates that they had sacrificed. He interpretatively denies his faith, who does anything which is in itself lawful, but which is regarded by the persecutors as a denial of our faith, or is

exacted by them in contempt of our holy religion. All lies in things in which religion is essentially concerned, though never so small in themselves, are grievous mortal sins; such as any false quotation of holy scripture; any lie or forgery about a miracle, reliques of saints, &c. "Faith requires in us a twofold duty, of the heart and of the mouth; nor can we be saved, unless we profess our faith by our mouth, which we carry in our hearts," says St. Austin, l. de fide & symb. c. 1.

7. Faith must have three qualities. 1. It must be firm, never admitting the least doubt or wavering in any point; and so constant that no worldly flatteries, pleasures, or prosperity may ever weaken it, nor threats or persecutions shake it. Dangers, torments, or death must not be able to shake it, as it filled the patriarchs and martyrs with confidence and joy under the most affrighting trials; triumphing in them over fires and the sword. By it, the first Christians "received with joy the plunder of their goods, knowing that they had a better and a more lasting substance." Heb. x. 34. By it, and for its sake, the ancient servants of God "were stoned, cut asunder, tempted, put to death by the sword; wandering about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted, of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in depths and caves of the earth." Heb. xi. 37 and 38.

8. A second property of faith is, that it be entire, receiving every article which the Catholic Church teaches. He who wilfully errs in any one point, destroys his assent of faith in his whole belief; because he rejects the motive, upon which the whole rests, viz., the divine authority of revelation. Thus, as one mortal sin destroys charity, so one obstinate error destroys the whole fabric of faith; but not an error of ignorance, which is excusable or invincible, and which is accompanied with the pious motion of true faith, and submission of the will to its holy motives. Hence, obstinate or wilful heretics, or infidels, may have a natural, human, or historical belief of any points of the Christian revelation, grounded on its motives of credibility, or on their own fancy, which chooses truth just as in other things it chooses error; but they have no divine or theological faith, which is a supernatural virtue, grace, and gift of God, infused by him into our souls, and residing habitually in us by his assistance. Infants receive this habit of faith in baptism, by which they are made faithful or believers before they are capable of actual faith, which habit is lost only by actual apostacy or heresy. The adult may receive this habit or permanent gift of faith before baptism; but it can be communicated to us only by a supernatural gift or infusion of God.

9. The third quality of faith is, that it be active. For, if it be barren of its fruit, which are good works, it cannot be profitable to those who have it, and will only serve to condemn them, and is called by St. James a carcase without the soul. It was a lively faith, which drew so many great men into deserts; made others prefer cells and poverty to thrones; encouraged others joyfully to condemn themselves to the most austere penitential lives, and made the martyrs embrace cheerfully racks and gibbets; and all the saints exult in their crosses and humiliations, as having found in them the most inestimable treasures. St. Serapion the Sindonite having given all to the poor, even his clothes, except one thin linen garment, and a book of the gospels, was asked on a very cold day why he was so thinly clad? To which, showing his book of the gospel,

he answered: "This has stripped me." If we look into ourselves, we shall often find our faith very weak, imperfect, and inactive. We must study earnestly to strengthen and increase it by prayer, meditation, and the heroic practice of virtue. The path of the just is a light growing till perfect day; that is, our faith is increasing, till it leads us to its term and everlasting recompence, the clear vision of God in glory. But it carries along with it also a present blessing, filling our hearts with a perpetual feast, a continual fund of overflowing comfort, joy, peace, and firm hope, which is our present support. "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. x. 13.

10. The indispensable necessity and incomparable advantages of actual faith show the instruction of all persons in the Christian Doctrine, or Catechism, to be the strictest and first of all obligations. Without the actual faith and supernatural knowledge of God, as the justifier of our souls, and our eternal rewarder, no one ever could obtain justification or salvation, either under the law of nature, or the Mosaic dispensation; nor, moreover, without a faith in him as our Redeemer from sins, though the knowledge of the means of this redemption was not in all equally explicit. Since the promulgation of the gospel, there is a like absolute necessity, that all distinctly know the Unity and Trinity of God, and the incarnation and death of the Son of God for our redemption, as the best divines teach and prove from holy scripture and the tradition of the church. "There is no other name but that of Christ, in which men may be saved." Acts iv. 12. All are struck by the serpent, and can be healed only by looking on, and believing in him. John iii. 14. "He that doth not believe, is already judged, because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John iii. 18. In the conversion of infidels, it seems the most proper method to begin their instruction with the moral precepts of the law of nature, the last things, especially the future judgment, the Lord's prayer, and lastly, to instruct them in the more sublime mysteries, for which they will be thus gradually prepared, as Lewis of Granada shows in his book "On the method of catechising among the Indians;" and this was followed by the fathers, as we see in their catechetical discourses still extant. But children, who already have faith, are to be instructed in the most essential articles first, which are these of which we speak, and without the distinct belief of which no adult is a Christian, or is capable of grace and justification, or of receiving worthily any sacrament. Whoever has received any in such a state of ignorance, even though it may seem inculpable, which is impossible in such persons, is bound to repeat the confessions he has made, while in that state.

11. All are obliged to know and to understand the Apostles' creed, with the articles which it contains, the commandments of God and the church, the Lord's prayer, and the sacraments, especially baptism, the blessed eucharist, and penance; as is often inculcated by the fathers and councils, and is sufficiently clear from the nature of our holy religion. All are bound to acquire a knowledge of these and other articles of our faith, more or less distinct, according to their state, profession, capacity, and other circumstances. But what has been said, regards the most simple amongst the faithful. Those, that are capable, are obliged to instruct themselves more deeply in the mysteries of religion. Persons, who live in

a voluntary ignorance of their religion, out of sloth and negligence, reject the holy knowledge of God and of his truths, and have the most terrible judgments to fear at his tribunal. Every one can find some time for trifling amusements, for idle conversation, or for temporal concerns. Shall that alone, which requires our whole attention, find no moments in the day or week? Parents are solicitous to procure for their children a temporal establishment and all necessaries for this life; and can they leave their souls destitute of the most essential spiritual assistance, an early instruction in the knowledge of God and their duty? Pastors tremble, if they hear, that any of their flock died without the sacraments, yet are not always solicitous that all be perfectly instructed in their holy religion, though this neglect is far more pernicious and enormous a crime, and the most certain ruin and damnation of those unhappy souls. We may call it the first duty of pastors in regard to their flock, of parents as to their children, and of masters towards their servants, that they be perfectly instructed in the Christian doctrine, and this early, as soon as children can speak, that they turn their tender hearts to God, when they first come to the use of reason.

12. The catechism teaches the greatest, the most necessary, and the most sublime of all sciences. Without faith man is a riddle to himself. He finds himself in a state of darkness and misery, under the weight of sin; but knows not whence he came, whither he is going, or why he is placed here; or by what means he is to seek the remedies he stands in need of. Faith is the light from heaven, which discovers all this to him. It teaches him what the philosophers could never find out; and the poorest Christian idiot can answer satisfactorily, from his catechism, those necessary important queries, which a Plato and an Aristotle knew nothing of. Faith teaches us our own happiness, and the means to attain it; it gives us the knowledge of God, and his most adorable mysteries; it is the participation of his secrets, which he communicates to us. The heathen philosophers boasted, that they would teach men happiness, and how to live well. But this he alone can discover to us, who came from heaven to be the light, the salvation, and the life of the world. Let them dispute on virtues and vices, dividing, defining, reasoning, sharply concluding, setting off their science with pompous words, who durst even cry out: Follow us, embrace our sect, if you desire to live well; yet they entered not by the gate; so they came to destroy, to sacrifice, to murder, as St. Austin says of them, Tr. 45, in Joan. The Christian revelation teaches us clearly all this; and shall we contemn its sacred school? Christ himself brought this doctrine from heaven. "The only begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him to us." John i. 18. "The queen of the south came from the bounds of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: behold more than Solomon here." John xii. 42. After God has sent his prophets and his only Son to teach us, wo to us if we neglect so great a salvation.

13. Some think it a mean office to instruct the ignorant and children in the rudiments of faith. But what employment can be more meritorious to ourselves, more proper to promote the honour of God or the salvation of our neighbour? By it we exercise the most excellent acts, both of charity and humility. Nothing more serviceable to our neighbour; nothing, as Pope Paul III. says, in his first bulls of approbation of the Society of Jesus, more fruitful or profitable to his salvation: for to

teach the rudiments of faith is to lay the foundation of christianity; it is to plant the seeds of true piety in the manner in which they will be sure to produce the greatest fruit. Were but the great truths of religion pressed upon tender minds in a suitable manner, the impression they would make would be lasting and deep; and such children would, both by their example and reproofs, be a curb to vice in others, and, growing up, be a comfort to their parents, and a public benefit to the church and state. A good catechist contributes more to the public peace and happiness than all the laws and magistrates. This employment, above all others, promotes the divine honour, in preserving tender souls from the early contagion of vice, and in helping to consecrate the first fruits of their hearts to God, and to lay a deep foundation of a virtuous life. St. Austin, St. Chrysostom, St. Cyril, and all the most eminent doctors aud greatest popes and bishops, thought it a high branch of their duty to catechise. St. Paul said: "I am a debtor to the wise and unwise." Rom. i. 14. What else did all the apostles travel over the whole world to do? "We become little ones in the midst of you, as if a nurse should cherish her children: so desirous of you, we would gladly impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own souls." 1 Thess ii. 7, 8. "I am made all to all, that I may gain all." Nay, our Lord himself made this his great employment. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me; he hath sent me to preach the gospel to the poor." Luke iv. 18. The learned and holy doctor, John Gerson, that most celebrated chancellor of the university of Paris, wrote a golden treatise "On drawing little ones to Christ." He employed, during all his life, a great part of his time in teaching children their catechism; and after he returned from the council of Constance, retiring to the city of Lyons, he assembled there every day all the children in the church of St. Paul, and taught them their catechism. When he was near death, he caused all the children to meet together in the church, and to cry out and often repeat: "My God, my Creator, have pity on thy poor servant, John Gerson." Our Saviour himself testified his delight in assisting that innocent age, when he said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of God; and embracing them, and laying his hands upon them, he blessed them." Mark x. 14, 15. The popes, St. Pius V. anno 1571, Ex debito, Bullar, t. 2, p. 345, and Paul V. anno 1607, Ex credito, Bull. t. 3, p. 223, erected a confraternity of catechists to be united to those of St. Peter's in Rome, and granted forty days' indulgence to all that assist every time catechism is given, even as hearers. Great care is to be taken that the catechists explain clearly the lessons, and that the children and others do not learn them merely as parrots, but understand them, and be penetrated with them; also that they conceive a great esteem for the catechism, and a holy ardent desire and emulation in it, the proof of a true thirst of virtue. When the Athenians had forbidden any citizen of Megara to set foot in Athens, under pain of death, one of that city, called Euclides, went in the night many miles disfigured, and lay hid in Athens during the day, returning the next night; and this he continued long to do, only that he might hear Socrates' lectures. Aul. Gellius, l. 6, c. 10. If a heathen was so earnest to learn a profane philosophy, what ought to be a Christian's zeal to hear the lessons of eternal life? If we desire to love God, the first step is, that we earnestly desire to know him and his holy will, which is done by the faith in which we are

instructed in the catechism. Children are to begin to learn its first articles as soon as they can speak, and to be always encouraged in learning it, by the assiduity and earnestness of parents and other teachers in instructing them; and the adult ought to make it their constant study.

DISCOURSE IX.

ON THE CREED.

1. THE creed is called, in latin, *symbolum*, or distinctive mark of our faith; for *symbolum* signifies a sign or mark which a general gave his soldiers, by which they were known to belong to his troops. It was composed by the apostles before they dispersed themselves to carry the gospel to all nations. We find it in the fourth age used in all the churches of the world, with very small variations, less than we find in different copies of the Bible, which could never have been the case had it not been made by the apostles in the beginning by common consent. Tertullian gives it almost word for word, and calls it a rule of faith descending from the tradition of the apostles, de Præscr. c. 21, 13, 36, l. contra. Pr. c. 23. St. Irenæus quotes a considerable part of it, and calls it "The faith received from the apostles," l. 1, c. 10. Lucifer of Cagliari quotes it to show what was the faith of the apostles, l. de non conveniendo cum hæreticis, p. 161. St. Ambrose says: "Let us believe the symbol of the apostles, which the Roman Church always preserves unaltered." Ep. ad Siricium Papam. Item Serm. ult. de jejunio Eliæ. t. 3, p. 326. St. Jerom, Pope Celestin, ep. 5, ad Nestorium, and all, ever since, have constantly attributed it to the apostles. This suffices to demonstrate it of apostolic institution against the cavils of some modern pretended critics, against whom may be read Nat. Alexander. Hist. Eccles. Petit-didier, Remarques sur la Bibl. de Du Pin, t. 1, p. 81, to 98. Ceillier, t. 1, p. 521.

Rufinus in the fifth century writes, in his exposition of the symbols: "Our ancestors assure us that the apostles being about to disperse themselves to preach the gospel in different nations, being all assembled together, filled with the Holy Ghost, made this short summary or symbol of their future preaching, every one composing what he judged necessary to be inserted; and they decreed this rule to be given to the faithful. It was not written; but only learned by tradition, during the three first centuries. Whence, St. Jerom says of it: "In the symbol of our faith and hope, which being delivered by the apostles, is not written in ink and paper, but on tables of the heart of flesh, the whole mystery of the Christian doctrine, after the confession of the Trinity, and of the unity of the church, is concluded by the resurrection of the flesh." It is not to be wondered that different translations introduced some little variation in words of small importance, remarked by Rufinus. The opinion, which attributes an article to each apostle, is a groundless conjecture, though hazarded in an anonymous modern sermon; inter serm. St. Aug. 115, de temp.

2. It has always been regarded by the church as its mark, and the rule of its faith, as in civil wars every soldier carries some badge to show to

what side he belongs, says Rufinus. It is the watchword of our contract or engagement with God in baptism, as St. Peter Chrysologus elegantly explains, sermon 62, *on the symbol*. The Christians were taught to recite it daily, and on all occasions. St. Ambrose says: "We must repeat the symbol, particularly before day-break every day, as the seal of our heart, which we must also recall to mind in any fear or danger. For when is a soldier to be found without his badge or arms, either in the camp or in battle?" l. 3, de virginibus, t. 5, p. 550. St. Austin, Serm. de Symbol. ad. Catec. c. 1, t. 6, p. 542, speaks thus to the catechumens: "Receive my children, the rule of faith, which is called the symbol; and when you have received it, write it in your hearts, and recite it every day by yourselves. Before you sleep, before you go out, arm yourselves with your symbol. No one writes the symbol, that your memory may be your book." And Serm, 213, t. 5, p. 938: "The symbol is the short rule of faith, to instruct the mind, without being a burthen to the memory. It contains in a few words, whence much is to be learned." And Serm. 58, ol. 42, inter 50, t. 1, p. 343: "Repeat your symbol daily, when you rise; repeat it when you lie down to sleep: render it to the Lord. Do not say, I said it yesterday, I said it to-day, I say it every day. Let it be your last looking-glass: thy riches; the daily attire of your mind. When you rise, do not you dress yourself? so by reciting your symbol, clothe your soul; and go not out naked. We are clothed with our faith. It is our helmet, and our only one." And Serm. 215, p. 1, t. 5, p. 947: "You have received and repeated your symbol, which you must always retain in your mind and heart, recite in your beds, meditate in the streets, in which your mind may watch, whilst you sleep in body.

3. Hence the catechumens were obliged to recite the symbol by heart before baptism. See St. Austin, Serm. 59, p. 343. Serm. 212, p 396. Serm. 213, p. 939, t. 5, ed. Ben. He relates, ep. 227, ol. 67, t. 2, p. 830, that a certain catechumen was refused baptism, because he could not recite the symbol, and in punishment of his neglect, as he was admonished in a dream, seized with a palsy in all his limbs, and in his tongue. He learned the symbol by writing, and after this recovered the use of them, except of his tongue. The creed, Lord's prayer, and decalogue were expounded in sermons to catechumens, and no one admitted to baptism who did not retain them. See St. Austin, Serm. 59, p. 343, &c. The Council of Mentz, an. 813, Can. 47, t. 7. Conc. p. 1251, orders all such to be enjoined severe fasts and other chastisements, who should not know perfectly the creed, the seal of faith, and the Lord's prayer. The second council of Rheims, an. 813, commands: that all know the words, and understand the sense: "for it is not lawful for any Christian to be ignorant of them." The capitulars of Theodulph, bishop of Orleans, capit. 62, an. 797, say of the creed and Lord's prayer, that if any one does not know them by heart, and often repeat them in his prayers, he cannot be a Catholic. The council of Frejus, in the same age, says: "Without them, no one can receive a portion in the kingdom of heaven." St. Charles admonishes all: "that the ignorant are to be asked concerning them, before they can be admitted to the sacraments." Conc. Med. 5, Act. Eccles. Med. 5, 1. p. 171.

4. The Nicene creed was formed by the first general council of Nice, against the Arian heresy. Some things were added against the Semia-

rians, and Macedonians, who denied the procession of the Holy Ghost. We read these additions in St. Epiphanius in Anchor, and they were approved of soon after in the second general council held at Constantinople, whence this is called the Constantinopolitan creed.

The Athanasian creed was framed against all the other heresies, which soon after Arianism attacked the holy mysteries of the incarnation and the Trinity. It can only be called Athanasian, because St. Athanasius was the great champion of the chief points, which it most explicitly professes, chiefly against the Arians and Apollinarists. It seems to have been composed by some Gallican prelate in the fifth century, before Eutyches, or even Nestorius, had broached their heresies. It was afterwards adopted by the churches of Spain, as appears from the fourth council of Toledo, whilst that country had great reason to guard itself against Arianism brought into it by the Goths. Fortunatus of Poitiers wrote a commentary upon it, and it has been used for many ages by all the western churches, and by many of the eastern.

The creed being the abridgement of what we are to believe by faith; and, as it were, the corner stone of this structure, every Christian is bound to be perfectly instructed in the rehearsing of each article, that he may recite it with understanding, and also accompany each word with his heart, dilating his affections in sentiments of profound adoration, praise, love, confidence, and other virtues, whilst he professes his firm assent to each mystery.

DISCOURSE X.

ON HOPE.

1. Faith is the ground of hope; for, by knowing the promises of God, and the means of attaining them, we conceive a vehement desire and strong hope of them. There is a natural hope, which, in good things, is a moral virtue, but in those that are evil, a passion. This is defined by philosophers an efficacious desire of some absent, difficult, possible good, with a confidence of obtaining it. This is the great support and comfort of human life, and the principle and soul of success in all undertakings. It alone carries man through all difficulties and labours, and gives enjoyment in the prosecution of good. Without its balm, life would be insupportable to men, as the joy of possession and contentment is not the portion of this world. Theological hope produces the same effects in a supernatural life, but so much the more noble as it is more elevated, and its motives stronger and more powerful. It is defined, "a virtue infused by God, by which we expect from him, with a firm confidence, the goods of eternal life." It is a theological virtue, as God is its immediate object; for its motive is his almighty power and infinite goodness. It is infused by God as faith is, and his special gift in our souls, which it raises to a supernatural state or power of acting, and is itself a supernatural habit. "The God of hope will fill you with all peace and joy." Rom. xv. 13. And the eternal wisdom says, Eccl. 24: "I am the mother of holy hope. In me is all hope of life and of virtue."

2. Hope implies not only a noble desire, but also an elevation and effort of the soul to enjoy the possession of God for all ages. Its principal object is God: but all the means of salvation, whether temporal or spiritual, likewise belong to its object, especially all the benefits of grace, which are future. "Hope is of pardon, of grace, and of glory," says St. Bernard, Serm. 45, de liv. p. 1181. The difficulty of attaining the object is a condition in hope, as obscurity is in faith. Hence hope remains in purgatory, but not in the blessed in heaven; where the apostle says: "Faith and hope cease, and only charity remains." 1 Cor. xiii. For, "what a man sees, how does he hope?" Rom. viii. Hence the saints in glory, till the day of judgment, rather expect than properly hope for felicity, and the glory of their own bodies.

The motive of our hope is jointly the power and goodness of God; that he is able and ready to save us. As this cannot fail, hope is absolutely certain in itself; yet it is accompanied with a fear of our malice and frailty; though he, who hopes, has a firm purpose to attain this felicity by fervour and watchfulness, through the succours of divine grace. Hope remains in sinners, though all sin abates something of its confidence and its free access to God. Despair and presumption destroy it, by removing its motive. Heresy likewise ruins hope by taking away faith, which is its foundation and the substance of the things which we hope for.

3. Hope is absolutely necessary to receive pardon of our sins, to live in grace, or to obtain eternal glory. It is necessary to a Christian life. It is only by desire and hope that we are on earth citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, walk towards our blessed country, and belong to the society of the saints. Without it, men are inhabitants of this Babylon, make it their country, live not here as banished men and strangers, and can pretend to no title or right to other benefits. "He, who does not sigh a stranger, shall not rejoice a citizen, because the desire is not in him," says St. Austin in Ps. 148, 11. 4, p. 1675. Hope makes a soul love and desire heaven her dear country, and extend her heart beyond the goods of this world into the riches of eternity, soaring above the heavens to God himself, whom she confidently desires to possess. Hence, it inspires a contempt of this mortal life and its false goods, as empty shadows and dangerous illusions, disengaging us from all fading pleasures and earthly affections, as not having a permanent city, but seeking that which is to come. Heb. xiii. 14. It excites us to love God, who has prepared such blessings for us, and has put into our hands the means of acquiring it. For, as hope arises from faith, so charity springs from hope. Thus charity again produces afresh, and strengthens hope, by a holy circle, as St. Ambrose observes in cap. 17, Luc. For we hope most earnestly to obtain what we love. Hope makes us fear, lest by negligence and sloth we lose what we hope amidst the dangers and rocks of this life, and animates us to labour with watchfulness and earnestness of salvation. "Every one, that hath this hope in him, sanctifieth himself." 1 John iii. 3. It gives courage and strength. "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." Ps. xxii. 4. It comforts and supports us under afflictions, and inspires us to make a good use of them. "By it the saints rejoiced in ignominies, torments, and death, because they sought a better country." Heb. xi. 14.

4. Hope is the soul of prayer; for we only ask of God the things, which we hope for. Hence, in our Lord's prayer we are taught to ask of God all

those goods, both temporal and eternal, which we hope from his bounty, as St. Austin observes, who says: "In the three first petitions eternal goods are begged; in the other four temporal blessings, which yet are necessary for the eternal." Enchir. c. 15. The fervour of our prayer will be greater in proportion to the vehemence and ardour of our hope. By hope, we pay to God a most acceptable homage of our souls. For by this virtue we profess, and not in words only, but also in our deepest affections and actions, that he is all-powerful and infinitely good and merciful. This honours him in those attributes, in which he chiefly delights; by this we acknowledge him our Father, and show ourselves to be his children, placing all our dependence in him, owning that we are nothing and have nothing of ourselves, but rest entirely on his paternal goodness and infinite power and mercy. He who delights in mercies above all his other works, must be pleased with a homage, by which he is honoured as the Father of mercies. "Because he has hoped in me, I will deliver him." Ps. xc.

This confidence in God is a principal disposition of heart, which moves him to receive our penance, and to hear our prayers, as he declares in his holy scriptures: "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have hoped in thee." Ps. xxxii. 22. "I have hoped in thee, O Lord, let me not be confounded for ever." Ps. xx.

5. Men lie under a strict precept of making an act of hope. First, when they are converted from sin, as the council of Trent declares, Sess. 6, c. 6: "He that hopeth in the Lord, shall be healed." Prov. xxviii. 25. And our Saviour in the gospel often imputes the pardon of sin to confidence in him. The sinner, struck with fear, must raise his confidence in the mercies of God, that he will forgive him, if he sues for pardon with a contrite heart. Secondly, a precept of this virtue obliges in the first moral moment of the use of reason, or when the promises of a future life are first suggested to a person. Thirdly, when a person has lost hope by a sin of despair or presumption. Fourthly, when it is necessary to overcome any temptation, especially of despair. Fifthly, in any moral danger of death. Lastly, so frequently, that the acts of this virtue be not intermitted for any considerable time. "We live by hope," says St. Bernard, Serm. 7, in Ps. 90, p. 838. We may continually repeat in our hearts, as well as with our mouths: "Thy kingdom come;" as St. Austin says, Tr. 4, in ep. Joan, t. 3, p. 2, p. 853: "Because you cannot yet see, let your whole duty be in desires. The whole life of a good Christian is a continued holy desire. By desiring you are made capable to be filled, when it shall come."[a]

6. The signs of perfect hope in the soul are: 1. If it works in her an entire obedience to the divine laws. 2. If she contemn the world and its false goods; for one that thinks only of the earth, and is wholly buried in it, can never truly be filled with this divine virtue. 3. If she, with continual sighs, desire the kingdom of heaven and the gifts of divine grace, and is solicitous and earnest in the practice of all the means to obtain them. 4. If she resist manfully all temptations and dangers, and bear courageously all afflictions and sufferings in the spirit of virtue. "God makes all omnipotent, who hope in him. All things are possible to him that believes, or has confidence. Is not he omnipotent, to whom all things are possible? Thus the soul, if she do not presume in herself, but rely on Christ, will be able so to command in herself, that no injustice

[a] Desiderando capax efficeris, vtiuenricumet implearis.

can ever tyrannise over her. As she places her strength in Christ, no violence, no storm, no deceit, no allurement can either throw her down or subdue her, clad with strength from above," says St. Bernard, Serm. 85, in Cant. n. 5, p. 1563. Lastly, true hope expels the fear of the world. How weak must be the faith of a Christian, whilst he forgets that God is his protector? "Thou hast forgotten the Lord thy Maker, who stretched out the heavens, and founded the earth: and thou hast been afraid continually all the day at the presence of his fury, who had afflicted thee, and had prepared himself to destroy thee; where is now the fury of thy oppressor?" Isa. i. 13. "If God be for us, who is against us? If wild beasts rage, fear God. Every creature is under him, whom you are commanded to fear." St. Aug. in Ps. 32. "The Emperor is surrounded by his guards, and he is without fear. A mortal man protected by mortal men is secure. And shall the man, who is protected by the immortal, fear and tremble?" St. Aug. in Ps. 26.

7. The first means to obtain Christian hope is to beg it ardently of God, repeating often, with the afflicted father in the gospel: "I believe; Lord, increase my faith." Matt. ix. 23. He had faith in Christ, but he asked a faith, which might raise him to perfect confidence.

The second means is to meditate often, and deeply to penetrate our hearts with the powerful motives which we have to hope in God, his almighty power, his mercy, his fidelity to his promises, and the pledges he has given us of his tenderness, goodness, and holy providence. "There are three things," says St. Bernard, "which so strengthen and confirm my hope, that no want of merits, no consideration of my own baseness, no immensity of the heavenly glory, can cast me from the height of hope, in which my heart is firmly rooted in God. I consider three things, in which all my hope is placed; the love with which God has adopted me, the truth of his promise, and his power to fulfil it. Let my foolish thoughts mutter ever so much, saying, Who are you? How great is that glory? By what merits do you hope to obtain it? And I will answer confidently; I know in whom I have believed and trusted, and I am assured that he has adopted me in excess of charity, that he is true in his promises, and all-powerful in their execution." Serm. 3, tom. 6, post Pent. n. 6.

If we consider his power, what can daunt us? What are all the powers of hell, and all the fury of creatures against him? If he is for us, it is as impossible that any thing can hurt us, as it is impossible for creatures to resist the arm of the Most High. The three children feared not the threats of the mighty king of Babylon, having God for their protector; him, whose will all nature obeys, by whose immediate help all creatures are moved, and whom nothing can withstand. Without him, all things cease to be. He will overturn all the laws of nature, and even annihilate the universe, sooner than suffer one word of his divine promises to fail.

8. But are we assured, that God will employ his power in our defence? Yes, most certainly. We believe no less in his mercy than in his omnipotence. He is most desirous to assist and save us. Being the sovereign good, he desires to communicate himself to his creatures with so great an ardour, that no understanding can conceive it. He pities and succours them in their miseries with a love, which he alone can comprehend. His goodness is tender above that of any father towards us.[a] He is our most

[a] Tam pater nemo, tam pius nemo. Tertullian.

loving Father by creation, redemption, and adoption. "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. I have graven thee in my hands." Isa. xiii. 15, 16. Hence he delights to be called our Father: "Your Father knows that you want all these things." Mat. vi. "Thou art our Father, and Abraham hath not known us, and Israel hath been ignorant of us: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer: from everlasting is thy name." Isa. lxiii. 16. "I am made a Father to Israel." Jer. xxi. And Christ says: "To your Father, and to my Father." John xx.

He is tender of us, because we are the noble workmanship of his divine hands. "Thou hatest nothing of those things which thou hast made; and thou sparest all things, because they are thine, O Lord, who lovest souls." Sap. xi. "Behold all souls are mine." Ezek. xviii. On this title the prophets prayed. "Visit that vineyard, which thy right hand hath planted." Ps. lxxvii. "And now, O Lord, thou art our Father; and we are clay, and thou art our maker, and we are the work of thy hands." Isa. lxiv. 8. "Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me wholly round about, and dost thou thus cast me down headlong on a sudden? Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me." Job x. 8, 9. "As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him: for he knoweth our frame." Ps. ii. 13, 14.

He is not only our creator, but our redeemer. So much has he loved us, as to have given his only Son for us. John iii. 16. He has by this given us a proof of the excess of his infinite love and goodness; he has also, by a new pledge, bound himself to love us still more. For the purchase of a thing is a new title of love and protection, especially if the price was immensely great.

9. He shows in particular his mercy to sinners, and his desire of their repentance. "Whence he is called the Father of mercies." 2 Cor. i. "He declares that it is not his will that the sinner should die, but be converted and live." Ezec. xviii. "For this he defers the punishment of sinners, that they may be converted;" Rom. ii. 5; "dissembling the sins of men for the sake of repentance;" Sap. xi. 24; chastising them that err, by little and little, admonishing them, and speaking to them, that they would leave their wickedness;" Sap. xii. 2; whom his divine justice might instantly plunge into hell. He calls upon them by the interior voice of their own consciences, by awakening examples, and by the most loving expostulations, threats, and invitations, of which all the prophets are full, by whose mouths he everywhere testifies how his tender bowels yearn over every soul fallen into sin. How does he expostulate and try all means with sinners before he punishes them, as he did with Jerusalem before he abandoned it? After many threats against that unfaithful city, he most tenderly expressed his love, and invited it to return, saying: "I am not angry;" disputing in himself, as if in doubt whether yet to deliver her over to her enemies, and crying out: "Will she not make peace with me? Will she not atone, and make peace?" Isa. xxvii. 4. "Hear, ye deaf; and ye blind, behold, that you may see. Who is blind but my servant; or deaf, but he to whom I have sent my messengers?" Isa. xlii. 18, 19. Read Jer. vii. Jonas iv. &c. If at last he is obliged to punish, it is with regret, and he calls it a strange or foreign work to him. "That he may do his work, his strange work; his work is strange to him." Isa. xxviii. 24.

Hence goodness and mercy are called his chief attributes, nay his very essence; and in their effects he has surpassed all his other works, as we see in the mysteries of our redemption.

How universally does he promise pardon to all that repent? Ezec. xi. xxxii. xxxiv. xxxvii.; Jer. iii. &c. Never did sinner return by a sincere conversion, who did not find pardon. Look to Adam and Eve, Manasses, (2 Par. xxxiii.) the Ninevites, (Jonas i. ii. iii. iv.) Magdalene, St. Paul, &c. Meditate on the parable of the prodigal son, and the others, by which our Saviour declares the joy of the whole court of heaven upon one sincere conversion, and the reflections of bishop Languet, at length, in his book "Sur les misericordes de Dieu." For this he has promised heaven; for this he has threatened hell. God, inviting to penance, says: "Am not I he?" &c. St. Chrysostom, t. 1. on Penance, p. 1010.

10. The inviolable fidelity of God to his promises is another strong motive to inspire us with confidence in him; a rock, which no waves, no storms can shake. His paternal goodness ought alone to have sufficed to calm all our doubts and fears. But to remove all our distrust and anxieties, he has been pleased to condescend to bind himself down by the most sacred engagement of his promises, which can no more fail than he can cease to be God. Can we entertain doubt or diffidence, after all the promises which he has made to assure us of his will towards us, and of the good things which he has prepared for us? They are numberless, and all for us. "From them we are called the sons of promise." Gal. iv. 28. At a time when he owes us nothing but punishment, he promises us infinite blessings, and his constant protection, if we choose it. Though his word be infallible, he has been pleased to confirm it with his oath. "God meaning more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel interposed an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort." Heb. vi. 17, 18. Oh, happy man, for whom God himself swears, and pawns his own unchangeable truth! but criminal and unhappy, if he still remain suspicious and distrustful.

11. To his oath he has added his written contract or covenant.[a] And for the pledge of his fidelity, and our greater security, he died to confirm his testament and alliance with us. He gives himself as our surety, and signs and ratifies our predestination with the same blood with which he effaced the schedule of our condemnation. When we see Christ come from heaven, and crucified for us, giving himself also to be our food in the holy sacrament of the altar, with what confidence do we expect the accomplishment of his promises? "He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not, with him, given us all things?" Rom. viii. 32.

The infinite treasure of the merits and of the adorable blood of Christ is made our ransom, is given to us, and put into our hands. If the immense joys of heaven are too high for us to aspire to, are they above the infinite merits of Christ? If our sins are grievous, and beyond the atonement of all creatures, is not the blood of Christ sufficient to wipe them away? If our weakness and abyss of indigence affright, let us remember, that the riches of Christ are ours. We offer them to his eternal Father, in atone-

[a] "Parum erat promissis; etiam scripto, &c. teneri, voluit." St. Aug. in B. 109.

ment for our sins, to cover our own miseries, to supply the imperfections and defects of our corrupt nature, and to draw all strength and grace from them. All hope is rashness and presumption, unless it be grounded on the merits of Christ, on which alone is founded our title to all grace and glory. St. Bernard, in a dangerous sickness, was tempted to despair; but answered the devil in these words: "It is true I cannot presume that I deserve heaven: but Christ, my Lord, has a double title to it, by inheritance from his Father, and by the price of his blood. This second he has transferred on me. Challenging it by his right, I am not confounded. By it the enemy was vanquished." So William of St. Thierry in his Life, b. 1, c. 12.

12. To exercise acts of hope, we must indeed be solicitous to use all proper means and diligence not to tempt God; but in them we must raise our hearts to God, placing all our confidence in him; relying on his mercy and power; saying always with the Psalmist, "Thou, O Lord, art my hope." Ps. xc. Upon which words St. Bernard writes thus, Serm. 9, in Ps. 90: *Qui habitat.* "Whatever is to be done, whatever is to be shunned, whatever is to be suffered, thou, O Lord, art my hope. This is to me the ground of all your promises, and of all my expectation. Let another pretend merit, boast that he bears the burden of the day and of the heat, that he fasts twice a-week, and is not like the rest of men; it is good for me to cleave to God alone, and to place all my confidence in him. Others hope in other things: one, perchance, in science; another in worldly cunning; this man in his birth and quality; that in honours; another in some other vanity; I have despised and looked upon every thing as dung, because thou, O Lord, art my hope. If rewards are promised me, I will hope to obtain them through thee; if armies rise up against me, if the world rages, if the devil foams, if the flesh burns against the spirit, in thee will I hope. To know this is to live by faith; nor can any other say from his heart: thou, O Lord, art my hope. If we have this wisdom, these sentiments, why do we delay to throw away entirely all miserable, vain, useless, and seducing hopes? why not cleave with all the fervour of our soul, and the whole application of our mind, to this blessed hope! If any thing can be impossible or difficult to him, seek another to trust in. But he can do all things by his word. Do you doubt of his will? The testimonies of his will are exceedingly credible to us. No man has greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. And when did that Supreme Majesty abandon any, that hoped in him? who invites all to trust in him: he forsakes no one, who relies on him; he will assist and deliver them, and rescue them, and save them." Ps. xxxvi. 40. "Why? By what merits? Hear what follows: Because they have hoped in him. The cause is sweet, yet powerful and irrefragable. From whatever tribulation they shall cry out to me, I will hear them. Behold, number your tribulations; according to their multitude his consolations have rejoiced my soul. On condition that you convert not yourself to another, on condition that you cry to him and trust in him, and not in any base earthly thing, you will have placed your refuge most high." Friends, riches, and all earthly things are false, treacherous, and weak. "Cursed is he who trusts in man, or makes flesh his strength." Jer. xvii. 5. "Trust not in princes, &c."

13. We must trust in the goodness and power of God, with entire confidence and peace. "To hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor to the soul, firm and sure." Heb. xi. 19. For hope is in

itself, that is, in its motives, and on the side of God, absolutely certain, as his power and goodness cannot fail. "None of them, that expect thee, shall be confounded." Ps. xxxiv. 3. "Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded." Eccl. ii. 11. "Hope confoundeth not." Rom. v. 5. Hence, the apostle expresses his unshaken hope in God, with the utmost assurance, Rom. viii., 38; 2 Tim. i. 12: "I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Our hope, indeed, is uncertain, and mixed with fear, on the side of our frailty and malice, that we may work our salvation in fear, humility, and watchfulness. But this fear is only accidental to hope, which does not imply it of its own nature. Nor does this fear produce any anxiety; but only fervour and watchfulness, and an entire distrust in ourselves. Sin indeed, increases this fear, and abates the sweetness of hope. Perfect charity expels servile fear. By hope, our souls already possess a certain anticipation of the joys of heaven, and abound in holy joy that our names are written in heaven. "Rejoicing in hope." Col. iii. 1. St. Paul calls it "our most strong comfort," Heb. vi. 18; and David says: "Let all rejoice who hope in the Lord."

In hope, we likewise acquire fervour, strength, and vigour in the practice of virtue; we perfectly take wing and fly. Isa. xl. "Hoping in the Lord, I shall not be weak." Ps. xxv. 1. Hope inspires courage, resignation, and joy, under all afflictions, labours, and sufferings. "Hope in the Lord, and do good." Ps. xxxvi.

14. We must exercise acts of hope of the eternal joys of heaven. Secondly, of the pardon of our sins, of grace, and of all the means of salvation. Thirdly, it is the same virtue, grounded on the same divine motives, by which we patiently confide in Providence, in all trials and afflictions, and hope for all temporal as well as eternal blessings. What confidence ought we not to have in our most tender heavenly Father, who knows all our necessities, and is able, and most willing, and desirous to relieve us? Poverty, want, calumnies, persecutions, &c. ought never to discourage us; for it is not in ourselves that we found our hope. We murmur and fret, because, by a secret pride, we build on our own merits, riches, or strength. It is only in God we are to place our whole confidence, waiting patiently his time for our deliverance. When things seem brought to an extremity, then we must exercise this virtue more strongly. "When things are quite despaired of by men, then is the time of the divine succour," says St. Austin in Ps. 117. Witness Susanna, the three children in the furnace, Daniel in the lion's den, Judith, Tobias, and so many others. "Can God ever abandon those, on whom he has always continued to heap so many benefits?" St. Ambr. in l. de Jacob, c. 6. Thus Job confided in God, when he said: "Although he should kill me, I will hope in him." Job xi. 15. And David: "If camps stand against me, my heart shall not fear. If war rises against me, in this will I hope." Ps. xxvi. 3. And he often repeats: Ps. cxviii.: "In thy words I have overhoped." He not only hopes, but hopes above all that can be said or thought by man, in God's mercy, which is infinite, far surpassing all hope; in his words, to endure beyond all time; in his promises, which exceed all merits; and in a happiness, which neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard.

DISCOURSE XI.

ON DESPAIR, PRESUMPTION, TEMPTING GOD, AND ON THE VIRTUE OF HOLY FEAR.

1. THE vices against hope are despair and presumption, to which last we join the tempting of God. Despair is a voluntary diffidence, by which a soul casts off the hope of attaining felicity or grace. It is one of the most enormous of all sins, after those which are directly contrary to the love of God, as blasphemy, sacrilege, &c., because it is the direct destruction of hope. Secondly, because it deprives God of his darling attribute and chief property, that of his mercy; whence it is more grievous than presumption. Lastly, because it is of all sins the most dangerous, averts the soul the most of all others from God, is the source of all sins, and bears, of all others, the greatest opposition to the spirit of penance. It may be accompanied with heresy, as an erroneous persuasion that God is not able or ready to pardon any sin, to give necessary graces, &c. Or it may be committed without any error in faith, out of sloth, or a violent attachment and slavery of the will to any passion, *e. g.* of impurity; refusing by a positive act to labour or employ the proper and necessary means to overcome sin, or to gain heaven, whether on account of the difficulty and uncertainty of salvation, or for the love of the world, and unwillingness to renounce sin. It is not despair but sloth, if the soul, without any positive act of the will, casting away all hope, neglect the means of necessary virtue. It is pusillanimity and dejection, not perfect despair, if one, without totally giving up his salvation, fall into despondency about it, and some negligence in the practice of the means of obtaining it; which is a disposition towards this fatal precipice, and in itself most pernicious, as it weakens hope and slackens the sinews of virtue; for which only hope and confidence give courage, cheerfulness, and fervour. "Happy is he, who hath had no sadness of mind, and who is not fallen from his hope." Eccli. xiv. 2.

2. All pusillanimity is to be vigorously resisted in the beginning. A soul assaulted by that demon is to examine, and thus lay the axe to the root of her evil, whether it proceed from any passion, love of the world, sloth, scrupulosity, &c. The first remedy against the temptation is to lay open the disorder, with entire confidence, to a charitable director, and follow faithfully his advice as of an angel sent by God to conduct us. "Be not wise with thyself." Prov. iii. 7. The second is, devout frequent recourse to the sacrament of penance; and also, as often as judged expedient, to the holy communion. The third is, a study to obtain the most perfect degree of sincere humility. A fourth, alms and the practice of good works; alms will be a source of great confidence before the high God. Tob. iv. 12. A fifth is, an entire distrust in oneself, no ways secretly building on our own merits, virtue, &c. A sixth is, a firm hope and confidence in the divine goodness and succour. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will make also with temptation an issue that you may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. x. 13.

3. To excite this confidence, a soul must meditate often on the goodness and mercies of God. "I myself will comfort you." Isa. i. 22. "Because

he has hoped in me, I will deliver him: I will protect him, because he has known my name. I am with him in tribulation: I will rescue him and will glorify him." Ps. xc. "Come to me, all you that labour and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you." Matt. xiii. 18. She must penetrate her heart with the powerful and comfortable motives of hope, especially the clemency of God. "Why will you die, O house of Israel!" Ezec. xviii. and xxxiii. Jer. iii. 1. Isa. i. 16. "How great is the mercy of the Lord, and how propitious to those who are converted to him!" Eccl. xvii. 20. The boundless merits of Christ, the love and mercy, which he testified for sinners on earth. "God so loved the world, &c." John iii. 16. "I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. "He came not to call the just, but sinners;" Matt. ix. 13; and made it his delight to converse with them. The efficacy of holy repentance and the examples of happy penitents are likewise to be often considered; and prayers and aspirations of divine love and hope often repeated with fervour. "Be not pusillanimous in thy mind." Eccl. vii. 9. "Say to the pusillanimous: Be thou strengthened and fear not." Isa. xxxv. 3. "Act manfully, and let your heart be strengthened, all you that hope in the Lord." Ps. xxx. 25. "Be strengthened in the Lord, and in the power of his strength." Eph. vi. 10. A dread of this mischief will be inspired by considering its malice, and how contrary it is to the filial confidence we ought to place in the goodness of God. How would a distrustful disposition in a son alienate and offend a tender beneficent father? How ungrateful, how injurious is such a behaviour? By considering likewise its dangers and evils; for it leaves a soul without vigour, and incapable of virtue, and plunges her into all sorts of disorders; and this without pleasure or even temporal advantage, depriving the soul of all comfort, robbing her of the sweetness of hope, overwhelming her with sadness and melancholy, and the greatest torment and anxiety man can fall into; and this by a fruitless crime, and for fear of courage to resist it: for which the will, always with the assistance of divine grace, has but to shake it off by one resolute act.

4. Temptations of despair are never to be disputed with or mused upon, but resolutely rejected by a firm act of hope in God, the tender lover of our souls, with an effectual purpose to serve him. Such suggestions, howsoever importunate, are only in the imagination: and there is more noise than danger in them. The devil, like a roaring lion, seeks to disturb us, because he cannot destroy us. Though the outlets of the senses and imagination are seized by him, he is not master even of them: God only suffers him to show in them how hideous a monster he is, and to what despair he is condemned. But God is guardian of your heart against him, and forbids him to hurt your soul, as he did with regard to Job. Job ii. 6. St. Bonaventure, "Memor sub finem," advises a soul to make him this answer: If I were to be damned, I would still love God during this whole life, and so much the more ardently as my time is shorter. I will lose no part of it, but praise him with all my strength, by every thought, word, work, and by every member. The pious Hilton says: Though all the devils in hell, appearing in bodily shapes, said to thee sleeping and waking, that thou shalt not be saved; or all men living on earth; and, were it possible, all the angels in heaven too, believe them not, and be not stirred from thy hope of salvation. Invoke God with the greater earnestness and confidence; remember the tenderness of his infinite mercies. "Thou, O

Lord, art sweet and mild, and of much mercy to all who invoke thee." Ps. lxxxv. 5. "Bountiful to forgive." Isa. lv. 7. "Rich in mercy." Heb. iv. 16. "His mercies are above all his works." Ps. cxliv. 9. Fly also to the patronage of the mother of God, the glorious Virgin Mary.

Some say, that their relapses and continual tepidity alarm them; but is dejection a means to make them rise? Hope is the principle and life of fervour. No one is capable of earnestness, whilst he is persuaded, that his labour is lost. No one can love a happiness, which he regards as the good of others, but not intended for himself. No one can have a resolution to go through a penitential mortified life, who looks upon it as to no purpose. Hope gives the brave courage in battle, and inspires comfort, life, and vigour, to persevere to the end.

5. Presumption is a rash expectation of felicity, and of the means to attain it. It may be joined with heresy, as if a man expects heaven by his own strength and good works, without grace, as the Pelagians did; or by grace, without his own endeavours or good works. Or it may be without heresy, as if a man, by an express act of the will, hopes to do penance when he pleases, and to gain heaven howsoever he lives. This last does not destroy the virtue of hope, but abuses its motives, and is a grievous and most dangerous sin against the Holy Ghost, or against the precept of sanctity and penance, and a resisting divine grace, which requires our co-operation. By this sin a guilty man, who justly deserves hell, instead of averting that punishment by his tears and prayers, assumes to himself to dispose of God's mercy and grace, as if he were the master of it; and, as it were, says to God: Come with your graces, when I shall please: and he behaves, as if salvation were the work of his own will, and not of God's mercy. Those are guilty of presumption who expose themselves rashly to dangers of soul or body; or who in necessities neglect the ordinary means, or omit to have recourse to God: likewise all who are emboldened to sin by relying on the divine mercy, by an express act of the will, though not such as sin only with a resolution of doing penance, as St. Thomas observes.

6. Tempting God is a sin, by which a creature makes a trial whether any perfection be in God or not: whether he actually doubt of it, or only act as if he doubted of it: as if a man neglect ordinary means in expectation of those which are miraculous and extraordinary. It is a vice against the virtue of religion which commands us to honour God; and also against hope, because it is a rash confidence in his assistance. Those are guilty of this sin, who ask or expect revelations or miracles to gratify vanity or curiosity, of which they would make him a favourer, and thus abuse his omnipotence and infinite wisdom to a vain end. Likewise those who neglect the natural means of *e.g.* health, or other temporal or spiritual benefits, expecting them miraculously; or who, without cause, present themselves to martyrdom, or rashly expose their lives; or who use the trials called *ordeal*, as trying a criminal by burning irons or the like, expecting that innocence should be protected by a miracle. Another manner of tempting God is to fix and prescribe to him a day, and the manner or bounds of his mercy, as the citizens of Bethulia are reproached by Judith, c. 8. to have done.

7. The remedies against presumption are: 1. To meditate on the maledictions pronounced by the word of God against this crime, and the circumstances which aggravate enormity; for it makes the divine goodness

the motive and instrument of sin, and converts it into a weapon to fight with against God: it usurps his sovereign right and dominion, the disposal of his graces, and pretends to give him the law. 2. Perfect humility and the true knowledge of ourselves and of our own weakness, nothingness, and total insufficiency. 3. To place our confidence in God alone, and endeavour not to put, by our pride and sloth, obstacles to his mercy and protection, without which we should certainly perish. 4. The fear of God, which is the check and curb to foolish presumption, and which moves us to speedy and perfect repentance, and to fervour and diligence in all things.

8. Hope produces a holy fear of God, which is reciprocally the maintainer of pious hope, the check and curb of the soul against presumption, and the mother of watchfulness and fervour. "You who fear the Lord, hope ye in him." Eccl. ii. 9. He that hopes fears to lose his happiness; he, who hopes without fear, is negligent; and he, who fears without hope, falls into despair. This holy fear makes us hate and avoid sin. "The fear of the Lord hates evil." Prov. viii. 13. "The fear of the Lord expels sin." Eccl. i. 27. It converts the heart to God; and gives courage, strength, and fervour against temptation, and is the beginning of charity. "They, who fear the Lord, will seek the things that are pleasing to him." Eccl. ii. 19. "The fear of God is the beginning of the conversion of a soul, the cleansing of vices, and the guardian of virtue," says Cassian, Inst. l. 4, c. 39. "They, who fear the Lord, keep his commandments." Eccl. ii. 21. "They who fear the Lord will do good." Eccl. xv. 1. "The fear of God is the beginning of his love." Eccl. xxv. 16. It banishes the love and fear of the world, which are the great sources of sin; and it triumphs over all temptations, and contemns all the allurements, threats, and torments of the world. "He who fears God does not fear grief, pain, poverty, banishment, or death," as Lactantius remarks, l. 6. By it a soul is made impregnable to vice, courageous and constant in every virtue. "In fear is the confidence of strength." Prov. xiv. 26. "He who fears the Lord shall not tremble or fear any thing, because he is his hope." Eccl. xxxiv. 16. "Fear not those, who kill the body." Mat. x. 26. "Tremble not at their fear." 1 Pet. iii. 14.

Holy fear or awe is a homage we owe to God, as our sovereign of infinite majesty and greatness. "If I am the Lord, where is my fear?" Malachy i. 6. To this virtue he promises all good gifts and graces. "The mercy of the Lord is from eternity to eternity on those who fear him. The seed of men, who fear God, shall be honoured." Eccl. x. 23. And Tobias recommends it under this title: "If we shall fear God, we shall have many goods." Tob. iv. 23. Fear the Lord, all you his saints, there is no want to those who fear him." Ps. xxxiii. 10. "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord." Ps. iii. 1. It is the guardian of all virtues, as it is called by St. Jerom; "Ep ad Fabiolam," and the most successful means to obtain, or recover and maintain the divine grace. "I have learned in truth, says St. Bernard, (Serm. 55 in Cant.) that nothing is so effectual to procure, recover, or preserve grace, as to be at all times in fear before God." "Blessed is the man, who is always fearful." Prov. xviii. 14. "Fear when grace is present, lest you lose it; fear, when it is gone, to regain it; and fear, when it is restored, lest you should not keep it well." It gives joy in the day of death. "It shall be well in the end with him who feareth the Lord, and he shall be blessed in the day of his death."

Eccl. i. 19. "Be in the fear of the Lord all the day, because thou shalt have hope in the end, and thy expectation shall not be taken away." Prov. xxiii. 17. It fills the heart with uninterrupted exultation and comfort. "The fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy. The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart." Eccl. i. 11.

9. This fear is wholesome and good, as long as it inclines us to secure more and more our salvation; it is a spur to us towards all good, and a bridle holding us from all evil. But then it must not disturb, trouble, or deject us. This would be an excess, and a dangerous fault. We must fear, but our hope must be the stronger. "That you abound in hope, and in the strength of the Holy Ghost." Rom. xv. 13. Hope is the principle of inward strength and vigour; nor ought virtuous persons to fear hoping too much, as long as they ground all their hopes only on God, and are earnest to neglect nothing to co-operate with his grace. But there is great danger in too weak a hope; souls naturally timorous must, above others, be sensible of this maxim, and be persuaded that distrust is a most dangerous temptation, that it draws a heart from God, cools his love, and insensibly produces a sloth and distaste in his service. It is our pusillanimity and want of confidence, that makes us succeed so ill in our undertakings for God. "Man of little faith, why hast thou doubted?" Mat. xiv. 31. The saints triumphed over all dangers by their invincible hope in God. "In thee have our fathers hoped; they have hoped, and thou hast delivered them. They trusted in thee, and were not confounded." Ps. xxi. 5, 6. Fear then must never abate, but strengthen our entire confidence in the mercy of God.

10. There is a fear of the world, as of its displeasure, of human respects, of death, &c. This is most base and criminal; it prefers the creature to the Creator, places its last end in it, and is severely condemned by Christ. "Do not fear those that kill the body." Mat. x. "Do not love the world." 1 John ii. There is a second criminal fear, called a *servilely (serviel,)* or *purely servile* fear, when a soul so much fears torments as to think less of offending God than of suffering them, which is to make them the principal evil, and to prefer them to sin; a grievous disorder and enormity.

A fear of torments is indeed commendable, and a virtue in itself. For reason and nature teach us to love ourselves, and to fear and shun pain, when it can be done without neglecting any duty. It is therefore good to fear sin, on account of hell and the divine judgments. This fear of torments restrains not only the heart; but also the interior affection of the will from consenting to sin, as St. Austin observes in Ps. 12, t. 4, p. 1439, and St. Thomas shows that it converts the heart from the world to God, and is from the Holy Ghost: for it is supernatural, as its motive is the revelation of eternal torments. This is called absolutely *servile fear;* because slaves live in the fear of chastisements. It is the beginning of a sinner's conversion, separates his heart from sin, and prepares it for the love of God. "Unless a man begin by fear to serve God, he will not arrive at love," says St. Augustin in Ps. 149, t. 4, p. 1691. "Fear prepares a place for charity. But when charity comes, this fear, which prepared the heart for her, is expelled. As much as she increases, it is abated. The greater the charity is, the less is the fear. But if there be no fear, there is nothing for charity to enter by. St. Austin, Tr. 9, in ep. Joan.

t. 3, par. 2, p. 888. "Fear is not in charity, but perfect charity casteth out fear, because fear hath pain. And he, that feareth, is not perfect in charity." 1 John iv. 18.

11. A fourth fear arises not from the punishment, but from the guilt of sin, and the awe of the divine Majesty. It is called a *filial* or *chaste* fear; because it is the awe of respect and love, and the dread of the offence of our heavenly Father, as that of dutiful sons and faithful spouses. This fear is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. Isa. xii. It is an effect and fruit of charity on which it is grounded; and it increases in proportion as charity is more perfect; for, the more a man loves God, the more he fears to offend him, as St. Thomas takes notice, who adds that it remains in heaven, not indeed arming the blessed against sin or evil, but as to the profound sentiment of reverential awe. "The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever." Ps. xviii. 10. In this sense the heavenly powers are said to tremble in the presence of God Job, xxvi. 11, &c. This is a homage which we owe to the sovereign Lord of all creatures, no less than that of love, gratitude, &c. "If I am the Lord, where is my fear?" Mal. i. 6.

12. The means to acquire and nourish in our hearts this holy fear of God, are chiefly the meditation on the last things, the constant walking in the presence of God, and devout prayer. "Pierce, O Lord, my flesh with thy fear; for I have trembled at thy judgments." Ps. xcviii. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Prov. i. 7. "It is as a paradise of benediction." Eccl. xi. 27. "Let us all hear together the conclusion of the discourse. Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is all man." Eccl. xii. 13. We can never be secure in this mortal life. The angels fell in heaven, Adam in paradise, and Judas in the company of Christ. We are always exposed to enemies, and must always watch and arm ourselves against them in fear and trembling, as St. Paul did. "The fear of the Lord expels sin; for he, who is without fear, cannot be justified." Eccl. i. 28. "Unless thou hold thyself diligently in the fear of the Lord, thy house shall quickly be overthrown." Eccl. xxxii. 4. "A wise man will fear in every thing, and in the days of sins will beware of sloth." Eccl. xviii. 27. "Fear for the past. Be not without fear for sin that is forgiven." Eccl. v. 5. Fear for the present in a continual spirit of penance, watchfulness, and prayer. In this dangerous sea, even in a calm, fear some hidden sand or rock, or some sudden storm. Fear even to lose this necessary and saving fear; and pray earnestly never to be forgotten in your danger. Fear for the time to come, especially for the great gift of perseverance, which we can never merit, and must continually pray and labour for. "No man knows whether he is worthy of love or hatred: but all things are reserved uncertain for the time to come." "We ought to fear exceedingly, brethren," says St. Austin, in Ps. lxxx. "It is not good that I should give you a false security: I will not give you what I myself have not. Fearing myself, I terrify you. I would make secure, if I were myself so. I fear hell." Yet love, hope, and confidence in God's goodness drive away all uneasiness and trouble of mind, whilst fear produces in us a laborious solicitude. We earnestly pray and watch, but rejoice to see our eternal lot in the hands of so good a God; "In thy hands are my lots." Ps. xxx. Fearing our malice and inconstancy, we never cease to implore his powerful succour and protection.

DISCOURSE XII.

ON DIFFIDENCE AND EXCESS OF FEARFULNESS.

1. My diffidence is very provoking to Almighty God. He is more delighted in his goodness and mercy than in all his other perfections. But by my unfaithful distrust I give them the lie. I offend him in his darling attribute. I stop his goodness from assisting and enriching me. I look upon his riches, his mercy, and goodness, as belonging to others, not to me. I imagine he is nothing but indignation, and most rigorous justice with regard to me; but in this I conceive a false notion of you, my God. All your benefits, all your promises, all your protestations of love regard me, as much as if there were no other creature existing. It is even for me you died. I, in particular, was the creature whom you had then present to your mind, as much as if you thought of no one else. Confide then, my soul, and be assured that thy eternal God is thy saviour and protector.

2. Want of confidence in God is the cause of misfortunes in the world. If sensible of our own poverty, weakness, and nothingness, of the emptiness and deceitfulness of creatures, we fly to God with an entire confidence in his power and goodness, nothing can be wanting to us, nothing impossible, though a mountain were to be removed and cast into the sea. Does not God, my soul, justly reproach thee for this want of faith or confidence? To this alone he ascribes in the gospels all want of his assistance. Why art thou so full of fear and distrust? Why art thou so often troubled? Is not God thy loving Father and protector?

3. "Hope is the life of penance, and the pledge of future inheritance." Eph. i. 13. It encourages the soul, and banishes pusillanimity. It gives perseverance; inspires a holy joy by the thought of future happiness, and a vehement desire and longing expectation of it. It produces a firm and effectual resolution of labouring for it, and is the greatest mark of eternal predestination. It disposes the soul for heavenly graces, and to receive the Holy Ghost. Whereas excess of fearfulness leads to despair, clouds the soul, banishes love, and that divine guest, whose habitation is always in peace. I will for the future rest in the arms of my Saviour, in the providence and love of my God. O how good, how sweet it is to sleep in this holy peace! Prince of Peace, who came to give peace to men of good will, and left it as your last blessing to all that are yours, give it to me, so that nothing may disturb me henceforth.

DISCOURSE XIII.

ON TEMPTATIONS OF DIFFIDENCE.

1. The enemy of my soul labours to affright me with the uncertainty of my future salvation, and with doubts whether my sins are now forgiven me. But, O my God, I will answer him with confidence, that thy mercies are infinite, and that thou desirest my salvation. On my side, I this

moment offer my heart to thee without reserve, imploring thy mercy and grace; and this I will during my life continue to do. Strengthen me with thy grace, and I will live in the firmest hope and assurance of finding mercy. I rejoice, that my lot is in thy merciful hands. I rejoice it is hidden from my eyes, lest security should draw me into negligence and presumption.

2. Have I used a sufficient care in my confession and repentance? I calm all these fears, my God, by obeying thy minister; thy goodness has given him to me for my guide and conductor; thou hast commanded me to hear him as thyself.

Should a prophet in thy name assure me, I could not but believe him. Thy minister is no less immediately sent by thee, and is the bearer of thy words and commands to me. If I disobey, I sin by rebellion against thee, and by proudly preferring my judgment to thy express will. Whilst I am clouded, and under trouble of mind, I am not capable of judging what is necessary or best; and by following my own lights I shall certainly throw myself into an endless labyrinth of perplexities, shall live and die in the dangerous state of servile fear and self-love; unless I obey simply, and without a speculative explanation of all my doubts, I may be assured, that even an angel from heaven would not be able to calm my fears and remove my perplexities. I will then renounce my own judgment, and entirely acquiesce in the orders of thy minister. Immortal thanks to thy goodness for having provided me with so easy a means of peace and tranquillity.

3. Whatever temptations of fear the devil suggests, I will always answer them with the royal prophet: "God is my mercy; yes, he is all my mercy." He is infinite in mercy, he is all mercy, and that mercy is all for me, whom he created to his own image, redeemed with his own precious blood, and loves for all eternity. If I have sinned, his sacred passion and infinite merits cry out aloud, that I am this moment again reconciled to him; if I love him. Nothing shall ever disturb this my firm hope. No; though all the devils in hell appearing in bodily shapes said to me sleeping and waking, that I should not be saved: or all men on earth, or all the angels in heaven, were it possible, I would not believe them, or be stirred from my hope of salvation. I would imitate that holy monk, who, when another told him it had been revealed to him he should be damned, answered: "Praise be to God alone in every thing. I will then double and treble my practises of penance and prayer, certain still of moving God to mercy. I will embrace my God with the two arms of humility and love."

DISCOURSE XIV.

ON ACTS OF CONFIDENCE.

1. WHATEVER I hope, fear, avoid, or do, thou, O Lord, art my only hope. This is the cause of all my promises, the ground of all my expectations. Let another display his merits; let him say he bears the burthen of the day and heat; let him allege he fasts twice a week, and glory he is not like other men; it is good for me to adhere to God alone, to place all my confidence in the Lord my God. One may confide in learning, another in worldly cunning, a third in his birth or nobility, others again

in riches, power, or other foolish vanities. All these things I look upon as dung, because you, O Lord, are my only hope. If rewards or glory be granted to me, it is through you I hope to obtain them; if battles appear against me, if the devil be enraged, the world threaten, the flesh allure; in you alone will I confide.

2. Why do not I make haste to throw aside all vain, unprofitable, and deceitful hopes, to adhere to this alone, which is firm, happy, and perfect? Cast all thy cares upon him, my soul, and he will provide, because he has care of thee. If thou thinkest anything impossible to him, seek another in whom thou mayest hope; but he can do all things by his only word. What is easier than for him to speak the word? If he decree to deliver me, I am delivered; if he please to raise me up, his will is my life; if he will, he can give me an eternal crown, he can do whatever he pleases.

3. I cannot doubt of his power, which knows no bounds; but can I fear his will? No, still less, if possible. The evident tokens of his love and desire of my salvation make this most manifest. No man has greater love than he who lays down his life for his friend. Yes, God's love for me is greater; he died for me when his enemy. He has moreover bound his love by a solemn promise and oath to succour me in all afflictions and calamities, that can befall me. And on what merits, on what condition on my side? only if I invoke him and put my whole trust in him. O how sweet, and, through his grace, which can never be wanting, how easy is this condition! Let the dangers be greater than those of the three children of the furnace: let the calamities surpass those of holy Job or Tobias; if I hope in God, and cry to him, he will certainly assist me. No one ever hoped in him, and was abandoned or confounded. Heaven and earth will sooner pass, &c. Read "Blosius's Comfort of the Dejected."

DISCOURSE XV.

ON CHARITY OR DIVINE LOVE.

1. THE love of God is two-fold: the *first* is the love of hope or *desire;* or, as the schoolmen call it, of *chaste concupiscence*. By this we love God, as known by faith, as our last end, and for our own happiness in possessing him. The *second* is the love of *benevolence* or *charity*, by which we love him for his own sake, or because he is infinitely good in himself. The former is more imperfect, and inferior, and has more of the love of ourselves than of God, whom it loves, because he will make us happy. Yet it contains nothing inordinate, but is good, and is a virtue. For it does not refer God to itself, any more than God referred his Son to the world, when he gave him for the world; but it precisely desires God to itself as its own supernatural last end. To love ourselves in the order of God's holy will is certainly just, and a duty and virtue. This love of *desire* is the first ground of the virtue of hope, though it may also exercise its acts upon the motive of true charity, desiring to possess God, only to love and praise him more purely and more perfectly in the union of his glory.

2. The love of benevolence or charity is the love of God above all things for his own sake, or because he is good in himself. The scriptures and

fathers know no love of God which is not above all things, or from the whole heart. Mat. xxii. 37, x. 37; Deut. iv, 29; Joel ii. 12. Inferior acts of benevolence are too imperfect to claim the name or privileges of this virtue, though they, in a lower degree, belong to it as imperfect acts or commencements. Charity is a love of *preference* above all things, esteeming and prizing God before all things, allowing no competition or rivalship with him, disposed to lose every thing rather than God, and to renounce them if his will require it. "Who will separate us from charity?" Rom. viii. 35. "He who loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." Mat. x. It is likewise above all things as to its object, desiring all glory to God above all things, rejoicing in his infinite perfections, and saying from the heart: "To God alone be honour and glory." Rom. xvi. "If any thing could be added to God from our works," says St. Thomas in 3 dist. 39, q. 1. a. 1. ad 3 and 4, "he who has charity, would do more for God's felicity than for his own."

But it is not necessary that charity should be the most felt among the affections of the heart (though it be generally, but not always or essentially, accompanied with an affectionate overflowing sweetness and feeling in the heart); for a person may weep more easily at the death of a friend than for sin, though he would regret that temporal loss much less than his having offended God. Whatever may be the intenseness of feeling in charity, it is certain that the will must really have a far greater esteem and preference for God and his will than for all things; which can scarcely be understood without a greater ardour in the service of God than with regard to any other object. "The least charity loves God more than the greatest passion can love gold and silver," says St. Thomas, 3 p. q. 70, a. 4.

3. Many say they love God, but deceive themselves. The heart cannot be seen; and an act of charity must be, 1. *interior*, because from the heart; 2. *sovereign*, or above all things, because from the whole heart; above the love of father or mother. "The measure of loving God is to love without measure," says St. Bernard, De dilig. Deo. 3. It must be also *gratuitous*. "The motive of loving God is God himself. God is not loved without a reward, though he is to be loved without the view of a reward. True love deserves a recompence, but does not ask it." Ibid. 4. It is *universal*, keeping faithfully all God's commandments.

The chief marks to show that charity reigns in a Christian heart, are, a sovereign horror of sin, and diligent flight of all dangers and occasions of it; a constant watchfulness; an earnest care of salvation, and the use of all the means to attain it; unwearied labour in the pursuit of virtue, and zeal to promote the honour of God and his holy love; a holy uniform conduct of life and actions; fraternal charity; the hatred of the world and its vanities; the constant remembrance and desire of heaven; joy and constancy in labouring and suffering for God.

The contrary signs show the love of God to be wanting in a soul; as a life of pleasures, sloth, vanity, and curiosity; love of the world; a mixture of any other foreign affection *in the whole mind*. We must love ourselves and all other things only for God and to God. In this matter Christians deceive themselves, and divide their hearts between God and the world. He deserves and challenges our whole heart, and all its affections. "Wo to the man with a double heart." Eccl. ii. 13. "Their heart is divided; now they shall perish." Ose. x. 2. He loves God less, who loves any thing with him not for his sake. "Christ will have no

partnership; he will possess alone what he has bought at so great a price. When men make a part in their heart to God, and a part to the devil, God, offended at the affront, departs, and the devil possesses the whole," says St. Austin, Tr. 7, in Joan. This is a spiritual adultery, and an infidelity to our heavenly spouse, who says: "I will espouse thee to myself for ever; and I will espouse thee to myself in fidelity, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." Ose. ii. 19. Our love ought to be most firm; constant under all trials; exercising all our strength and power in every action; nay, were it possible, it ought to be immense as God is, infinite as God is. It must at least occupy and fill our whole heart, and vigorously employ all our faculties. "He who says that he knows God, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar." 1 John ii. 4. "If any one love me, he will keep my word." John xiv. 23. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." John xiv. 21. "Let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in truth." 1 John iii. 18. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." James ii. 10. "Because he breaks the charity, on which the whole law depends," says St. Austin, ep. 29, ad Hieron. t. 2, p. 45, ed. Lov. 5. Charity must be active and fervent. "Love cannot be idle," says St. Austin in Ps. xxxi.[a] And St. Thomas: "Love does great things, and thinks them little: does many things, and thinks them few; works long, and thinks it very short." Opusc. 60, 6. Charity ought to be pure, without mixture, or a disrelish of the practices of penance and virtue, hard-heartedness to the poor, &c. As love is interior, we cannot judge of it, even in ourselves, but by these exterior marks: for it does not consist in protestations or words, too often apt to lie and deceive.

4. A modern sect of false contemplatives, called *Quietists*, pretended to establish a pure habitual state of disinterested divine love, in which a soul should be, in her superior or rational part, stripped of all desires, hope, or feeling; rendered perfectly indifferent as to her own salvation and damnation; suspended in inactive contemplation on God; fixed on him by pure faith and abstraction of mind from all desires; lastly, not concurring to or answerable for whatever passes, even criminally, in the lower or sensible part of the soul. These propositions contain many fanatical errors. For, 1. We call that love interested and mercenary, which seeks itself, or some recompence out of God, not that which seeks God himself. 2. In the most perfect habit of charity there always remains the habit of the love of desire and of hope, and acts of each are to be often formed. 3. All men are obliged to have hope; also to pray for bliss; consequently to have an effectual desire of it. 4. God is amiable for his benefits to us, and as our Redeemer; consequently is to be loved also under this respect. 5. We are bound to wish our neighbour's happiness; and why not our own? 6. We were created for bliss; therefore we ought to desire it. We may argue in like manner as to the fear of hell.

The love of desire easily leads to, and terminates in the love of true charity. For he who truly loves God as good in him, easily ascends to the love of God as good in himself. Nay, the love of charity itself naturally inclines the heart to desire him strongly. For love always desires the union of the object which it loves, and produces a vehement impulse or effort towards it.

[a] "Dilectio vacare non potest."

5. Charity is a special gift of God, the greatest of his commandments, the friendship of a creature with his God, the mother, queen, and soul, or form of all virtues, without which there is no true virtue meritorious of eternal life. Habitual charity is not the person of the Holy Ghost, though it brings into the soul his special presence, but a supernatural quality or habit infused by God, by which God is loved for himself above all things, and all, that are capable of bliss, are loved for God. It is a theological virtue, because its object in every respect is only God, and in the most noble manner. It is a special, and the most excellent gift of God, infused only by his grace in our souls. "The charity of God is poured forth in our souls by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." Rom. v. 5. It is by the same theological virtue, because from the same motive, that we love ourselves, and all men and angels for the sake of Almighty God; as, when we love a man, we love his children, servants, and all that belong to him, for his sake. God declares this precept of loving him with our whole heart, "the greatest and the first commandment;" Mat. xxii. 38; and that the love of our neighbour is the second and the next to it. He adds: "On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets;" ib. For all the ten commandments may be reduced to the love of God and of our neighbour, which two commandments are strictly but one and the same, viz., that of holy charity, as St. Austin observes.

Whence St. Paul calls the love of our neighbour the fulfilling of the law. "For, if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Rom. xii. 6.

6. Charity is the friendship of a man with God.[a] "Thy friends are exceedingly honoured, O God." Ps. cxxxviii. "Made partakers of the friendship of God." Sap. vii. "Abraham was made the friend of God." James ii. 23. "You are my friends." John xv. 14. Friendship is de-defined by philosophers, "a mutual benevolence, with some communication of goods and counsels, on a resemblance of nature or manners." Love of *desire* suffices not; it must be a *benevolence*, and this mutual, and known on both sides; for no one is a friend of another without knowing it: benevolence may be in one; but this must be reciprocal, to make it friendship. Indeed, as man can never love God to an equality with his love, or what he deserves, this is a friendship, not of equality but of reciprocity, in which each party loves according to his condition and power. Here is a mutual communication of benefits, as the philosopher requires, when he says: "All things are common amongst friends." God bestows on us his graces and favours; declares us his sons, and makes us partakers of his treasures and kingdom. We make him the return of our thanks, our hearts, and the sacrifice of ourselves and actions. He imparts to us the knowledge of his mysteries. "Can we conceal from Abraham what I am going to do?" Gen. xviii. 17. "I will not call you servants; for a servant knows not what his master does." John xv. 15. As we cannot sufficiently admire, love, and thank God for his wonderful goodness and condescension, in admitting us to his divine friendship, or adequately esteem its dignity, honour, and advantages; so we must contemn, forego, and cheerfully suffer all things, to make ourselves worthy of it. Why do

[a] Read St. Thomas, 2. 2. a. q. 23. a. 1. & F. Honorè Ecla. Contempt. T. 3. c. 1. 2. p. 27.

we not say with Politianus the courtier, mentioned by St. Austin, Conf. l. 8, c. 6: "What do we aim at or pretend to by all our toils and dangers? To obtain the inconstant favour of the emperor. Behold, I am this moment the friend of God, if I only will."

7. Charity is the mother and queen of all virtues, and the most noble amongst the theological. "Of these charity is the greater." 1 Cor. xiii. 13. "Charity is the most excellent of all virtues," says St. Thomas, "as it attains God to rest in him." 2 qu. q. 25, a. 6. It remaineth in heaven when faith and hope will be no more. "Charity never falleth away." Ib. v. 8. It only changes the state of its object in glory. It is the form, the life, and soul of all other virtues; for, though they may be true virtues without charity, yet without it they are dead, and without their form, or the power of meriting before God. "How great is charity, which if it be wanting, all the rest are possessed in vain; if it exist, all things are with it;" exclaims St. Prosper, Sent. 32. St. Paul assures us, 1 Cor. xiii., that though he should speak with the tongues of men and angels, if he had not charity, he should be only as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, *i. e.* empty noise; and if he had the gift of prophecy, and should know all mysteries and secrets of grace and nature, and had faith so as to be able to remove mountains, and had not charity, he was nothing; and though he should give all his goods to the poor, and deliver his body to the flames, if he had not charity, it would profit him nothing. "Have charity, and thou wilt have all things: for, without it, nothing will profit, whatever thou canst have," says St. Austin, Tr. 32, in Joan, p. 529. t. 3. St. Thomas proves that it is the form of all virtues, because it directs their acts to their supernatural last end, gives them their beauty and tendency, which is their perfection before God, and makes them meritorious of eternal life, as the artificial disposition of the colours by a skilful hand gives the form and beauty to a piece of painting. He shows also that it is the mother of all virtues, because it commands the exercise of all other virtues, and transforms them all, and even the most ordinary actions of life performed by it, into a new and far more noble order of perfect virtue. For every action, even the least and meanest, becomes a most perfect virtue before God, if performed through the motive of perfect love; for he considers not what is offered, but chiefly from how pure and ardent a charity.

8. The love of God is something so excellent and so great, that no glorified spirit in heaven, nor any creature that is or can be framed, can do anything more sublime, more noble, or high. All the powers of men and angels can do nothing better or greater than to employ themselves in this holy love, which incomparably excelleth all other works and supernatural virtues. All the blessed spirits in heaven have, to all eternity, no other occupation than to contemplate and love the infinite ocean of all good, and to rejoice in him; for whether they adore, praise, thank, or glorify his boundless Majesty, or execute faithfully his will in the ministry, in which he places them, they do all in the seraphic ardour of pure love, and can no more cease one moment from repeating the acts of his love than they can cease to be happy. What is far more, this is the incessant and eternal employment of God himself, who from eternity to eternity is continually taken up in loving and enjoying himself, and his own infinite perfections. He even takes the title of love itself, being the pure fire of infinite love. "God is charity;" 1 John iv.; because he is himself

essentially boundless love, and all that he does proceeds from pure love. Likewise, because he communicates to us by his grace this divine charity, which is a participation of his own; and he requires nothing from us except that we love him. All other things, which he commands us, are only helps to this love, or the accomplishment and exercise of it. And nothing is more indispensable, more just, more profitable, or more glorious, than that we should render, without ceasing, this homage of our love to him, who is infinite goodness, and whom we can never love as much as he deserves.

9. Charity justifies us, blots out all our sins, sanctifies our souls, and renders them the objects of God's love. "I love those who love me." Prov. viii. 17. "Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much." Luke vii. 48.

It makes the service of God sweet and easy. By it, labours and sufferings for God are pleasure to the heart. It fills the soul with perpetual joy—joy which the world can never take from her, and places her under the special providence of God, so that nothing can hurt her. "The Lord keeps all who love him." Psalm cxxiv. 20. It crowns all her actions and moments, loads her with merits, and obtains by every act a new increase of grace. "He shall receive the crown of life which God has promised to those that love him." 1 Peter i. 12. "Partners of the divine nature." 2 Peter i. 4. "Sons of God, heirs of God, and co-heirs of Christ." Rom. viii. 16. "Every one who loves is born of God." 1 John iv. 7. "He who abides in charity, abides in God, and God in him." 1 John iv. 16. "If any one love me, he shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him." John xiv. 23. Like a devouring fire, it consumes all earthly affections in the soul, commanding all her powers. It unites us to God, whereas the property of love is the closest union; it transforms us into him, and communicates to us the participation of his infinite riches and graces. "He who cleaves to God is one spirit with him." 1 Cor. vi. It expels servile fear. "Fear is not in charity; but perfect charity casteth out fear, because fear hath pain: and he that feareth is not perfect in charity." 1 John iv. 18. It also makes a soul superior to all evils. "Love is strong as death." Cant. viii. 6. "A great word," exclaims St. Austin in Ps. xii.; "the strength of charity could not be expressed in a more sublime manner. For who resists death? Men resist fire, water, the sword; they resist powers; they resist kings. Death only comes, which no one resists; nothing is stronger than it. Therefore charity is compared to its strength." Of it St. Paul could say: "I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 38, 39. Sufferings, crosses, and torments are its fuel. Instead of abating it, they make it blaze higher, and burn more vehemently, as stubble meeting a raging fire. "To those that love God, all things co-operate to good." Rom. viii. 28. "Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods devour it. If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing." Cant. viii. 7.

Richard of St. Victor, in his book "On the Degrees of Charity," shows how sweet, how invincible, how insatiable it is, and that it knows not the very name of pain or difficulty in the service of God. *Lastly*, it brings along

with it, or perfects all other virtues; repentance for and perfect hatred of sin, patience and joy in suffering, perfect obedience to all God's commandments, and the accomplishment of all our duties: sincere humility; for the knowledge of God gives us the most feeling knowledge of ourselves and our own baseness and nothingness: firm confidence in him; for a soul, by love resting in God and dwelling in him, fears nothing from creatures, and sets the heavens, earth, and hell at defiance: fortitude; for no affliction, obstacle, or danger can terrify or move a heart united to God by love, and joined to the sovereign Master of the universe: chastity; for the love of God excludes all mixture of profane love of creatures. It is particularly jealous of the least affection or spot of impurity; creating a perfect cleanness of heart, constancy, liberty, purity of affection, fervour in works; zeal to promote by all ways the divine honour; love of solitude, and hatred of the world, to enjoy the society of God; attention to every duty and occasion of virtue; and a perpetual watchfulness over ourselves and all our thoughts and actions; for it is quick-sighted to discover the least foreign, secret, profane flame, which arises in the heart, and is solicitous and careful immediately to extinguish and extirpate the least spark. But the greatest of all its privileges and prerogatives is, that it overcomes God himself, and forces him, who is all powerful and invincible, to bow down and humble himself to it; it disarms his hand, when it is ready to fall upon and crush the sinner; it has the power to make him in a moment revoke his sentence of condemnation, and changes his anger and justice into mercy and love; it triumphs over his heart, and obliges him to exalt a creature into a partnership of his friendship and of his own glory. "If charity be so great and so amiable when described, what is it when possessed," cries out St. Austin, Tr. 7, in ep. Joan, t. 3, p. 876.

10. God has commanded us to love him with our whole hearts, and with all our strength. Deut. vi.; Mat. xxii.; 1 Cor. xiii. This is the first and greatest of all the commandments. *First*, in its extent; for it includes all the rest, and is the accomplishment of the whole law. *Secondly*, in the intention of the supreme Legislator, who refers all the others to it, and makes it alone the end of them all. "Charity is the end of the precept." 1 Tim. i. 5. *Thirdly*, in dignity and merit; for it gives the value to every other virtue. *Fourthly*, in order; for it is the foundation of all Christian perfection. *Fifthly*, in its duration; for it subsists for ever. *Sixthly*, in excellence; for it is the supreme perfection and elevation, at which any rational creature can arrive.

If this sovereign love of God above all things be not the ruling affection of our hearts, we transgress this first and greatest of the divine commandments: "He that loves not, abides in death." 1 John iii. 14. We are bound moreover always to advance in divine charity, in which consists the perfection of virtue. "They shall go from virtue to virtue." Ps. xxxiii. "Pray that your charity abound more and more." Phil. i. 9. "May God give you increase, and make your charity abound more and more to one another." 1 Thess. ii. 12. "The inward man is renewed from day to day." 2 Cor. iv. 16. "He that is just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." Apoc. xxii. 11.

11. The perfection of a thing consists in the attaining of the end, for which it was created. The ultimate end of a rational creature is God. Our perfection, therefore, must necessarily consist in divine charity, which unites our soul to God, places us in our proper centre, and brings us to

our last end. We shall obtain it perfectly only in heaven, where our union with God will be made perfect; and this is the end of the precept of charity, which will be completely fulfilled only in the state of glory. It is of the perfection of the end of the precept, that we are to understand St. Austin, l. de perfectione justitiæ, c. 8, t. 10, p. 175, and St. Bernard, Serm. 150, in Cant. p. 1488, and which they say no man can arrive at in this mortal life. But the precept itself, or the obligation of the precept, may certainly be fulfilled by just men on earth, who love God with a true love of esteem and preference above all things. No one, however, can have this love, who does not burn with a desire, and who does not continually labour to advance in this holy and pure charity. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord." 2 Peter iii. 18. What a noble career, what a spacious field is opened to a Christian, in the immensity of divine love in which he is always to advance! Yet how great progress soever he shall have made in it, he will ever see an infinity beyond him, and that his love still falls infinitely short of what God deserves, whose boundless amiable perfections infinitely surpass all the homages of creatures. This reflection ought vehemently to excite us to apply ourselves to love God, to the utmost power of our narrow capacity, and continually to labour in enlarging it.

12. All persons are particularly obliged to form an act of divine charity, when they first arrive at the use of reason, or at the light of faith; also in every probable danger of death, both to put on the armour against their spiritual enemies, and to go forth to meet their spouse with the lamp of charity burning in their hands, and clothed with the nuptial garment. Likewise, if such an act of love be necessary to repel any dangerous temptation to sin; and when it is necessary to raise a soul from mortal sin. *Lastly*, acts of divine charity are to be frequent; for a considerable delay or intermission would be a mortal sin, as has been said of faith and hope. They are comprised in sincere acts of praise, adoration, thanksgiving, oblation of ourselves to God, &c. They may daily be formed to accompany all our actions, and the exercise of other virtues.

St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and others teach, that, for any virtuous action to be meritorious of grace or of eternal life, it must not only be done in a state of grace, and for some supernatural motive; but must also proceed from and be directed by a motive of actual charity. For the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii., speaks of actual charity, when he declares it necessary even to faith, martyrdom, &c. that they may merit eternal life; for the characters he gives it, viz., that it is patient, &c., denote actual not habitual charity. The crown of life is promised only to those that love God; James i. 12; and only for such works as are done in the name of Christ, or for him; Matt. x.; John xv. &c.; but it suffices if charity be virtually the principle of any action, and the real motive to the practice of it. For this purpose, it should be frequently renewed in the day, as Bellarmin and others observe. It is advisable to make a new act of divine love in every considerable new employment, by raising our hearts afresh to God in some thought or aspiration of praise, adoration, oblation, or the like. The greater the fervour with which this is done, the higher will be the degree of merit in every work.

DISCOURSE XVI.

MEANS TO OBTAIN AND IMPROVE DIVINE CHARITY IN OUR SOULS, AND ON THE ACTS OF THIS VIRTUE.

1. HERE, more than on any other occasion, prayer is the first means to be employed, and has the greatest success. It is true, that all good is the proper object of man's will, which is made to love it. But charity being a supernatural love, and the perfection of our supernatural life, the will, with all its efforts, can never obtain it by its own strength. Prayer is, therefore, a resource absolutely necessary on this occasion, and we must ask to receive. But we must ask it with a perseverance, fervour, and earnestness proportioned to so great a gift. This will continually enlarge and fit our souls more and more to receive it, by increasing our languishing desires and thirst of it. This will move Almighty God to bestow on us this treasure, which he commands us most strictly to ask of him, only out of an infinite desire to enrich us with it. Hence, to make this petition is to make him the prayer, which is of all others the most agreeable to him; it is to beg that he may execute his own designs upon us, and that he may be pleased to satisfy his own love and ardent desires. But, alas! few ask this divine charity of God, because they esteem it little; and their desires of it are so very tepid and languid, that they scarcely think of asking of him this greatest of all his gifts. If we desire to obtain this his most precious and holy love, we must conjure him without intermission, and with the greatest earnestness of which we are capable, that it will please him to kindle this his divine flame in our breasts.

2. The second means to procure holy charity is the mortification of self-love, its capital enemy, in our souls. For it will enter in proportion as we purify our hearts. The diminution of concupiscence is the increase of charity, as St. Austin says; and charity is perfect, when there is no concupiscence. By self-love is meant not that virtuous love, by which we love ourselves in God, and desire our happiness in him; but that inordinate love, by which we seek the satisfaction of our senses and inclinations in perishable goods, which is the source of all our passions and sins, which easily insinuates itself into all our actions, and which often dignifies itself under the name of every virtue. This we must study perpetually and universally to resist and destroy in all its branches, but especially in our predominant passions. Without this we shall be governed only by the inclinations of nature. Can the love of God ever find place in such a heart? We must first learn the holy hatred of ourselves, before we can obtain divine charity. If we truly hate ourselves, that is, the corruption of our heart, we shall rejoice to mortify all that flatters sensuality, pride, or any inclination of corrupt nature. Without this crucifixion of the source of our passions, without this hatred of ourselves, our virtue will be only exterior, our devotion rather in the senses and lips than in the heart, and all our exercises of piety not so much the fruit of grace as of temper, constitution, or a happy education. The continual victory over our inclinations, a continual practice of the mortification always to overcome ourselves, even in little things, as in refusing our eyes and other senses too great liberty even in ordinary things, is a great good, and the shortest

way to a perfect love of God. The saints arrived at it only by means of a constant course of self-denial. The most profound humility is, above all others, the most essential means to remove the principal obstacles to divine love in our hearts, which are those caused by pride. "Two loves have made two cities; the love of ourselves, to the contempt of God, founded the earthly city; but the love of God, to the contempt of ourselves, the heavenly city," says St. Austin, l. 14, de civ. Dei, 8. The first must be destroyed, to lay the foundation of the second. "Whoever desires to nourish charity, let him labour in extirpating concupiscence," says the same father, l. 8, 3, quæ. & qu. 36.

3. The love of God is to be pure, without the mixture of any love contrary to it. He who loves any creature, not for God, loves God so much the less, and not with his whole heart. Pure love sacrifices all the affections of the soul entirely to God. Charity seeks not its own interests; 1 Cor. xiii. 5. It does not exclude the desire of our own happiness, as the Quietists pretended; which would be inordinate: for no man can be indifferent to his own damnation or salvation, even on any pretence of having no other will than that of God's greater glory; for the will of God is, that we save our souls; and though the love of God must be the predominant affection of our soul, even above our fear of hell, yet no one is to make chimerical suppositions.

We are even bound to love ourselves, our neighbours, and all God's creatures; but in God, and according to the order of his providence, as he has ordered us to love them; and only for his sake, as it is his will that we should love them, not to seek merely ourselves or our own satisfaction; for this is the corruption of nature, and a defiling of the love of God with an impure mixture. Oh! did we see into the bottom of our hearts, what secret researches of self-love, what hidden monsters which we caress, should we not discover there? What self-love, what subtle attachments to our own will or private judgment, what inclinations of corrupt nature entertained, what tenderness for this perishable body, what sentiments unworthy of and contrary to the pure love of God! The most perfect always bewail an odious mixture of this earthly love with their love of God; and it was their constant application to labour to purify their hearts more and more from it, and to discover the least earthly filth in their affections. We are so much blinded by self-love, that we never remove its film from before our eyes, to discern the disguises of our affections, that sloth which often enervates us, that pride which frequently puffs us up, that envy which secretly gnaws us, and that sensuality which continually seduces us. To root out this evil, a strict watchfulness over the motions of our hearts, a constant practice of the mortification of our senses, will, and inclinations, and assiduous prayer and holy meditation, are our indispensable duty. Thus shall we dispose ourselves to the love of God. Divine charity, as it is made more and more perfect, will consume and destroy self-love, and subdue all our affections to itself.

4. The devout and frequent consideration of the motives of divine love is the next means. The knowledge of the object goes before the love, and excites it. The will is blind, unless the understanding presents its light, and shows it the beauty and perfections, which command its love. The goodness, the greatness, the perfections, the benefits of Almighty God must be meditated on thoroughly, to give the soul a true knowledge of God,

and to inflame the heart. Likewise, no one can love God, who does not desire to think on him. What should we think of the love of a friend, who should never love our company, or even bear to think of us? We are commanded to love God with our whole soul. The understanding is part of the soul as well as the will. It must then be employed in love, in its manner, *i. e.* by meditating on the graces and goodness of God; and *secondly*, by the submission and sacrifice of its lights and knowledge to true love. And as it inflames the will by its light, so is it again enlightened and purified in its knowledge from the fire of love in the will, which sends back its lights more pure after they have passed through its flame. Thus, these two powers, by entertaining a perpetual commerce of light and love, mutually assist each other in this holy exercise.

5. Though the understanding concurs to love, it is properly the act of the will. It is principally by the exercise of the affections in loving, that this gift is to be improved; the other means being rather preparatory to it. Sentiments of the heart are the food of love, and nourish and entertain it. By them, the soul always mounts higher; for every act of love contributes to increase the habit, and to make the following act more intense, more pure, and more perfect. Without the continual repetition of these acts, love soon languishes, and is at last extinguished by the love of creatures entering in its place. A human heart cannot be without some love, for love is its life. Hence, creatures quickly fill a soul, that neglects continually to feed itself on God. Besides, love is always making presents to its beloved. That heart does not love, but is governed by self-interest, which always asks and never gives. God bestows his graces and favours: he never ceases to shower them down upon us. But then, he expects a return to his love, without which his commerce with us is interrupted and broken. In our extreme indigence, can we give any thing to God? He is the inexhaustible fountain of all treasures, and we are poor and empty; yet he finds something in our poverty itself to exact from us. This is our heart, our love. And this he requires, to enrich and inflame it. For all his eternal love, and his infinite goodness and benefits, he only exacts our love in return. He says only, "Son, give me thy heart."

And this he does too for our interest. And shall we sacrilegiously refuse him this, to give it to the devil? We ought never to cease paying him this sacrifice both by exterior and by interior acts of love. By exterior, suffering with patience and joy; labouring assiduously in the practice of every virtue; an exact fidelity in keeping his commandments and counsels; and by offering and directing all our thoughts and actions to God out of an intention of pure love. It sits on the middle of the heart as on its throne, surrounded by all the virtues: it puts them all in motion, and gives them their value and merit; it directs all the senses, all the affections of the heart, and all the powers of the soul. It is insatiable in labouring and suffering for God, and never weary, dejected, or pusillanimous in accomplishing the holy will, and in promoting the honour of God.

6. Interior acts of the will give to the exterior all their virtue, and are to be perpetual, that the soul may live and breathe only by divine love. They are principally made by acts of complacency, of benevolence, of adoration, praise, &c. In acts of complacency, we rejoice by love in the infinite happiness and perfections, of which God is possessed; that he is infinitely good, infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, and infinitely perfect. By love we feel a pleasure and joy in all the goods which he, whom we love,

enjoys; and if we love God above all things, we must feel greater joy in the sovereign excellencies, which we contemplate in him, than for whatever we could possess in ourselves. In these sentiments we may say to him: "I praise and adore you, because you are my infinite God, and are alone he that is. I rejoice to consider you so great, so good, so powerful, and so perfect; to see that no creatures could ever alter or diminish your perfections and excellencies; and that all, that are and can be, must obey your power, and through your mercy, or through your justice, serve to your honour. How does my soul rejoice, that you are the necessary independent Being, and that, whatever we are or have, we necessarily receive from you; and by you and in you we have our being, which, if you ceased to preserve, we should, that moment, entirely lose. I am a nothing; but you are the great all; I am ignorance and darkness, but you are infinite wisdom; I am weakness, but you are strength; I am poverty, but you are riches; I am misery, but you are sovereign happiness and perfection. Unite, by your gracious mercy, your greatness, your wisdom, your strength, your riches, your bliss, to my poverty and nothingness; that in you I may rejoice, and my defects be supplied."

7. Offer these your acts of complacency, in union with those of all the saints in glory for all eternity; but especially in union with those, which God conceives in his own perfections, in the infinite knowledge and love of himself, rejoicing exceedingly in this his boundless and holy complacency, which he enjoys in himself; for which we ought to bless, praise, and thank him evermore, and desire him the homages of all his creatures. This is the eternal, the most sweet occupation of the blessed.

8. By acts of *benevolence*, we must wish to God, and desire to give him all possible glory, because due to him, and because he is infinitely worthy of it; we must give ourselves up to him without reserve; must praise and bless him with all our strength; and seeing that we are able to do this too imperfectly, we must invite all creatures to join with us in this homage, with the three children; "All the works of the Lord, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him for ever;" (Dan. iii.) and with David: "Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels." Ps. cxlviii. And as the soul finds all this too little to satisfy her desires, she joins the praises of Christ as man, and, above all, the infinite love of the three adorable persons of the blessed Trinity. God comprehends his infinite perfections, and loves his own excellencies with an infinite love. As the soul will behold God, and love him far more perfectly in heaven, she desires ardently to go thither to praise God, to bless, to love, and serve him perfectly, crying out with the royal prophet: "Take my soul from the prison, that I may confess to thee;" that I may sing your praises night and day, without interruption, and to endless ages.

She flies the least sin far more than death, as the injury and sole evil of her beloved, and she is pierced with grief as often as she sees him offended.

She sings in her heart: "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Tim. i. 17. "Blessed art thou, O Lord God, and worthy of praise, and glorious, and exalted for ages. The God of my father, and I will exalt him." Exod. xv. 2.

9. But, O God of glory, how shall I glorify you? how shall I praise you? I am not able; nor can all creatures do it worthily. Yet this my incapacity overwhelms me with joy in your incomprehensible greatness; because you alone are able to do it. Glorify yourself therefore, great

God; exalt our own praise and greatness. You know, O Lord, that I most earnestly desire to give you, every moment, all the glory, honour, and praise that your elect, both angels and men, will offer you for all eternity. Accept, at least, my desire, and my good will.

I beseech you, O God of glory, and I conjure you by every thing, that renders you great and glorious, to remove from my heart whatever can be an obstacle to your glory in me; and that you place me in that condition, in which I may be able to glorify you in the most perfect manner. As you see in the treasures of your infinite wisdom the innumerable ways, by which men may be conducted to you; lead me, if you please, by that which you know may most advance your high glory; whatever that be, it is no matter, provided you thereby inseparably attach me to your holy will, and to yourself, that I may consummate the holocaust of myself in glorifying you.

10. By every breath that I draw, every step that I take, every word that I speak, every thought that I form, I desire to give myself entirely to you, my God, and to pay you as much honour, joy, thanks, and love, as all the angels and men shall be able to give you for all eternity; and I give you this my heart, with all the affection possible. I earnestly beg that you receive and keep it for ever; that you extirpate out of it every other love and affection, that it may be, not a heart, but a furnace of pure flames of your most ardent love.

11. To you do I surrender my heart to have no other will but yours, resigned without exception to receive whatever it shall please you to appoint. Love even among men produces a conformity of will, and a condescension to the will of one, who is subject to failings and passions; how much more ought I to love and resign myself to your will, always just, most holy, and full of tenderness and mercy? It is just, that I should have no will but yours. In this consists my sanctification. "Thou shalt be called my will." Isa. lxii. 4. My own will is the most insupportable burthen, if I do not renounce it. I rejoice only in finding and following in all things your holy will; I will henceforward desire nothing but your divine will. In all things this shall be my joy, my light, and the centre of my rest. "My heart said unto thee; my face has sought thee; thy face, O Lord, will I seek." Ps. xxvi. 8.

DISCOURSE XVII.

ON FRATERNAL CHARITY.

1. CHRIST compares the precept of loving our neighbour to the first and great commandment of loving God, and says it is the second great precept, and like to that first; adding, "On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets." Mat. xxii. 40. All the other commandments are contained in these two, and are only particular branches of them. For the love of God commands us to honour him, to reverence his name, and to sanctify the time consecrated to his service. And fraternal charity forbids us to kill, to commit adultery, or to defile our own body, to steal, and the rest. Nay, if we speak properly, these two precepts are but one and the same, being one and the same habit, though

exercised by different acts, and referred to different immediate objects. For we love our neighbour by charity, not for his own sake, but for God, and for the same motive on which we love God. To understand this, we are to take notice, that the love of our neighbour is two-fold; the one natural, and only a moral virtue, by which we love him through natural and human motives, as for his natural abilities, or for our own interest; whereas reason teaches us to love our brother. The second or christian love of our neighbour is of a superior order, a supernatural and theological virtue, grounded on faith, and on the supernatural motives of divine charity, viz., for the sake of God, and for his infinite goodness, by which he recommends our neighbour to our love. Hence we love God and our neighbour by the same habit of charity, and upon one and the same motive, as St. Thomas observes. On this account the love of God is necessarily implied in this love of our neighbour. Therefore St. Paul reduces them both to one commandment, when he writes of fraternal charity: "He that loveth his neighbour, hath fulfilled the law." Rom. xiii. 8. And again: "Love is the fulfilling of the law." v. 10.

2. St. Thomas reckons three conditions as requisite to constitute the love of our neighbour, fraternal charity. *First*, that it be holy and for God. "He truly loves another," says St. Austin, (Serm. 335,) "who loves God in his friend, (*i. e.*) because God has commanded it, and has placed his image and his grace in him; or who loves him, that God by his grace and charity may reign in him." Hence the same father infers, Serm. 395, that the natural love of a husband for his wife, of a father for his son, of one friend for another, founded in the sympathy of temper or other qualities, though a moral and necessary virtue, differs entirely from that charity, which is commanded us by these words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." A natural fondness is found even in beasts. "Shall I commend that as something great in a man, which I see in a tiger? If you do not love a son, you are worse than the most venomous serpent," says St. Austin, ib.

The *second* condition is, that it be just, not condescending to another in any thing evil. If a friend desires you to favour his passions, he is to be treated as a lunatic; and if you have true charity, you will strive to cure the distemper of his mind, as you would his corporal disease, says the same father, Serm. 335.

The *third* condition is, that charity be true, or with an affection of benevolence. For he who loves another for his own profit or pleasure, does not properly love him, but himself. Hence the men of pleasure, gamesters, and the like, are far from possessing this divine virtue. For though nothing is more common than love among men, and no one can live without loving something, yet nothing is more rare than charity. For where is he to be found, who loves his neighbour with this true, this just, this holy affection?

3. The love of our neighbour must be *affective*, or sincere in the affection of the heart; and *effective*, showing itself by actions. It must be interior, sincere, and tender; for we are commanded to love our neighbour as we do ourselves; now we love ourselves with an interior and tender love; and such was the love of Christ towards us, which he has laid down as the rule of our love towards our neighbour. "This is my command that you love one another, as I love you." John xv. St. Paul states it as a high pitch of malice to be *without affection* or tenderness." Rom. i. 31. Hence all per-

sons offend against charity, who harbour interior motions of envy, jealousy, or malice; who repine at any good of others, or rejoice at any loss or affliction in them; nay, farther, who do not rejoice in their prosperity, especially in every spiritual advantage; and who do not conceive an inward feeling of compassion in their misfortunes, with an efficacious desire of succouring them, if it were in their power. Our charity must also be effective, and show itself by external acts of beneficence, alms, and fraternal correction; likewise of patience, forgiveness, and satisfaction for injuries. We are to succour our neighbour in his necessities, by all the works of mercy both corporal and spiritual, in giving wholesome advice and counsel to those who stand in need of it, by admonishing sinners, and chastising those under our charge, by instructing the ignorant, by comforting the afflicted, in forgiving injuries, by bearing patiently the troublesome, and in praying for the living and the dead; and in relieving all under bodily necessities. So manifold are the miseries of men, both temporal and spiritual, that a man can scarcely stir a foot or turn his eyes without meeting with something to bear, to compassionate, or otherwise to exercise his charity upon, at least in his heart. "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" 2 Cor. xi. 29.

4. The apostle sums up the qualities or marks of this charity, by which we ought to examine our own hearts, that we may see whether we possess this divine virtue. 1 Cor. xiii. 4. We will first consider the negatives, or what it avoids. "Charity envieth not." It wishes every sort of good to every neighbour; rejoices to see it fall to another, as if it was its own happiness; for it regards the success of another as its own. On the contrary, self-love is filled with eager desires, would have all to itself, and looks upon whatever good falls to the share of another as a robbery upon itself. "Charity dealeth not perversely," or doth nothing with malice, is an enemy to contestations, inconstancy, and rashness. "She is not puffed up." She sees nothing in herself but misery and baseness; far from contemning any one, she places herself beneath the whole world. She takes notice only of the virtues of others, and of her own faults and indigence; if she see others sin before her eyes, she thence takes occasion to humble herself the more, being persuaded that she deserves to be still more abandoned by divine grace. To entertain a considerable contempt of any person whomsoever is a grievous sin against both charity and humility; for we owe to every one some degree of esteem and love: and God looks upon himself as despised in the person of our neighbour. "He who dispises you, despises me." Luke x. "Those who despise me, shall be ignoble." 1 Kings i. What was the crime of the Pharisee, who despised the publican? "He went home justified, rather than the other." Luke xviii. God frequently treats such arrogant persons, even in this life, according to their own measure towards their neighbour, and humbles them beneath him as much as they were puffed up above him. Witness Aman and Mardochai; the proud Absalom, and the brothers of Joseph. Such persons become the abhorrence and anathema of all men. But whom are we particularly bound not to despise? In the *first* place, parents; also magistrates and all superiors. Tremble at the judgment executed on Core, Dathan, and Abiron; and on Absalom. *Secondly*, the poor and distressed. "Take care ye despise not one of those little ones." Mat. xviii. "Whatever you do to one of them, you do to me." Mat. xxv. It is true both of the poor and of superiors: "He who despises you, despises me." Luke x.

God is especially the protector of those who have no protectors among men. *Thirdly*, we must not contemn any one for corporal defects. This is an ordinary subject of raillery in the world. In such cases charity is moved to tenderness and compassion. How blind is pride, which, instead of thanking God for his blessings, and comforting the afflicted, insults the members of God whom he has afflicted. *Fourthly*, neither must we contemn sinners. They were made to the images of God, and may still be his. *Fifthly*, nor servants. Before God there is no distinction of conditions in the world. Death will equal all the virtuous, and the humble will then be exalted above us. "These are the persons, whom we held in contempt," &c. Wisdom. v. 3. God is equally their Father, and will revenge their unjust treatment. "Charity is not ambitious." Far from desiring to supplant others, it looks upon their advancement as its own gain and joy. By it a man is content with the station in which God and his superiors have placed him: grounded in humility, he trembles at the thought of inordinate desires of raising himself, saying with the Psalmist: "Raising, thou hast crushed me." He desires only the glory of God, not his own glory or honour, unless from God, and referred purely to him. "Charity seeks not its own interest." It banishes that excessive attachment to ourselves, by which we study only our own interest or pleasure, and sacrifice to this idol the most essential duties of justice, gratitude, and nature itself. He who seeks his own interest, so as to prefer it to his duty towards God or his neighbour, loves himself more than he does God or his neighbour, and seeks and pursues inordinately his own interest. By this mark alone we may discern how rare true charity is among men. St. Paul could complain even of the days of the apostles: "All seek their own interest, not that of Jesus Christ." Phil. ii. 21. How much more perceptible is this test now-a-days? Let us sound our own hearts, and we shall feel the truth of it. How infinitely tender are we in regard to ourselves, yet cold and insensible towards others? Again, "Charity is not provoked to anger." It receives injuries in profound peace and resignation. If sin rouses its zeal, it never loses its tenderness and compassion for the sinner. "It thinks no ill;" having only eyes to see the virtues of others, and a heart tender in excusing at least the intention, when it cannot the action, incapable of rash suspicions, and of putting bad constructions on the actions of others. It finds no malignant pleasure of joy in the humiliation of others, or in sin and injustice; loving God the sovereign justice, it loves only justice, and rejoices in his truth and holy will.

5. We must not think that these negative precepts satisfy the precept of charity; it moreover requires many and weighty positive duties. "Charity is kind," says the apostle: for it teaches us sincerely to esteem, honour, and love our neighbour; to testify our esteem for him by always speaking honourably of him, and treating him with courtesy, not by a base flattery, but with a cordial sincerity; showing him respect, honour, and civility in words and actions, according to his rank; "preventing each other with respect." Though honour be due to superiors, a degree of respect is owing from the king to the meanest slave, as he is a rational creature bearing the divine image, and destined to be a son of God, and heir of his glory. *Lastly*, giving him marks of our sincere love and friendship, of our joy in his prosperity, of our compassion in his adversity, and, on all occasions, of all the good offices and service in our power. The good will and desire of this is called benignity and benevolence; but the performance of them, goodness

and beneficence. Hence charity studies never to offend any one either by word or action; never by any jests or bantering to give any one the least pain or confusion; but to behave with an unaffected sincere urbanity and affability to all.

6. "Charity is patient; and endureth all." It receives with submission and cheerfulness all the chastisements and determinations of heaven, as effects of the divine tenderness and mercy; also all that the malice of men can make her suffer. It triumphs over their enmity and injuries by benefits; it is by this that she imitates God, and shows that she is the daughter of him, who is charity itself; she overcomes her enemy by gaining him to herself and to God.

"Charity beareth all things;" according to that important advice, which the apostle gives in another place in these words: "Bear the burdens one of another, and so ye shall fulfil the law of Christ." Gal. vi. This duty of bearing whatever is troublesome or disagreeable to us in others affords continual exercise to charity, and is the most just and most necessary lesson of civil society. We all have our faults; if any one thinks himself exempt from them, this shows him to be guilty of a very great one, and of an intolerable pride. Besides, all men have their humours, ways, and manners, which are disagreeable to many. These are burdens, which the apostle exhorts us mutually to bear. This would be an infallible means of preserving peace, union, charity, and meekness, the greatest comforts of a social life. Our daily quarrels, enmities, and dissensions arise from the want of this spirit. Is it not most just, that, as we desire others should bear our whims, indiscretions, and sallies, we should also bear those of others? But self-love, the great impostor and seducer of the world, persuades us that we injure nobody, and that all we do or say is well done or spoken; but that others are intolerable in their behaviour or manners. Blinded by this cursed self-love, whilst we see motes in the eyes of others, we do not discern beams in our own, and excuse our daily multiplied faults. Thus the Pharisee compared his conceited virtues with the supposed faults of the publican, because he saw imaginary good only in himself, and real faults in others.

"The seeds of vice spring up in every breast,
And he, who is least faulty, is the best.
Be sure to spare the freckles of your friend,
And, in return, your hump will ne'er offend.
Justice and equity both loudly plead,
That all should pardon give, who pardon need."*

HOR. l. 1, Sat. 3.

7. The motives which engage us to this fraternal charity, are the excellence and the necessity of this virtue. "If any man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God, that he that loveth God, loveth also his brother." 1 John iv. 21. This love is the fulfilling of the law. It was a precept of the eternal law of nature: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as

* Nam vitiis nemo sine nascitur; optimus ille est,
Qui minimis urgetur.——
Qui ne tuberibus propriis offendat amicum
Postulat, ignoscat verrucis illius; æquum est
Peccatis veniam poscentem reddere rursus.

thyself." But Christ has inculcated it in a special, and more rigorous manner. He declares, that "to love our neighbour is above all holocausts and sacrifices;" Mark xii. 33; because it is an act of divine charity; for we love God in the person of our neighbour. This virtue also in some measure belongs to religion; for it honours God in his image. In his last discourse to his disciples, before his death, in which he recommended to them those things which he had most at heart, he made this an express commandment, and often repeated it in the most tender manner: "These things I command you, that you love one another." John xv. 17. He calls it by excellency his own, and his favourite precept. "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I loved you." John xv. 12. This shows, that he gave to this law a greater strictness and extent; and to express how dear it was to him, he declares it to be his new precept: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." John xiii. 34. He appointed it the mark by which his followers should be distinguished from others. "By this all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." John xiii. 35. It is not by the power of casting out devils, or by the gifts of miracles, prophecy, or tongues, which he gave to his apostles; nor by the other graces which he confers on us; but by this charity that the elect are distinguished from the reprobate. Many wicked will say at the last day: Lord, we have prophesied, and have cast out devils, and wrought miracles in thy name, to whom he will say: "Then I shall confess to them, I know ye not;" Mat. xxvi.; because they do not bear the mark by which his disciples are distinguished, viz., this charity. As if he should say, as St. Austin writes: "Others, who are not mine, have other gifts with you, the gifts of tongues and of prophecy, the sacraments, faith; therefore not in those gifts, though good, but in charity should men know that you are mine." Our divine Redeemer thrice asked this charity of his Father for his disciples, in the end of his prayer for them after this exhortation: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name, that they may be one, as we also are." John xvii. 11. And again: "Not for them only do I pray; but for them also, who through their words shall believe in me; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee." John xvii. 20, 21. And a third time, v. 22: "That they may be one, as we also are one."

8. Another motive is the example of Christ. He most powerfully excites us to the love of our neighbour, by the excess of his love for us. His very incarnation, birth, and sacred death, all that he preached, all that he suffered, proceeded purely from his charity to us. With what divine patience and condescension did he bear the ignorance, the stupidity, and the failings of his apostles, who were not filled with the Holy Ghost, nor perfect in his knowledge and virtue till after his death? With what meekness did he bear the insults, and answer the captious ensnaring questions of the Pharisees and Scribes? If he sometimes reproved their vices, even this he did in the spirit of charity. What tenderness and compassion did he not show to sinners, to the sick, and to all mankind? "He went along doing good and healing all." Acts x. 38. The excess of this charity appeared in pardoning and praying for his enemies, and in spilling the last drop of his precious blood in redeeming them. This is the model of our love for one another. He himself often inculcates his precept to be, that we love one another as he has loved us. "As I have loved you." And St. John: "My dearest, if God has so loved us, we ought also to

love one another." 1 John iv. 11. And St. Paul: "Be ye the followers of God, as most dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and delivered himself for us." Eph. v. 1, 2. "We that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves; for Christ did not please himself; but as it is written: The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell upon me." Rom. xv. 1, 3. If we considered how Jesus loved us and our neighbour, and how earnestly he recommended him to our love for his own sake, how tenderly should we love every one in him? This made St. Francis of Sales to cry out: "When shall we see the souls of our neighbours in the sacred breast of our Redeemer, and melt in true love for them all? Alas! he who considers his neighbour in himself, hazards not to love him purely, nor constantly, nor equally; but then in Jesus, who could not but love him, bear with him, and support his imperfections? Who could find him in that place a trouble or burthensome?" God the Father loves our brother, and delivered his only Son to the ignominy of the cross for him; the Son loves him to that excess, that he died for him; the angels love him; all the just in heaven and on earth love him; and shall not man love him, his brother, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone? No bond can be more sacred than that of alliance in the same blood. "For he is our brother and our flesh." Gen. xxvii. 27.

9. All men are children of the same father, descending from Adam by the same origin, have the same name, and are linked together in one society by innumerable ties of nature and grace. Every brother bears the image of God; if we love God, we must necessarily love those who belong to God by so close an alliance. "Have we not all the same father? Did not the same God create us? Why then do we all despise our brother?" Mal. Moreover, he has the same nature with us. Every one loves his own likeness. He is also redeemed by the same blood of Jesus Christ with us; has been regenerated by the same baptism, and made by that sacrament a living member of Christ, a son of God, and fellow-heir of heaven with us. Those who are united with us in faith, are more closely united with us in Jesus Christ our head, in whom we are fellow-members, and by whom we are fed with the same sacraments, and are united in the oblation of the same holy sacrifice. Especially, we are cemented together in the same mystical body of Christ by the communion of his precious blood in the sacrament of the altar. "The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? For we being many are made one bread, one body, all who partake of one bread." 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. Shall we not love him, who is a son of the same common mother the church, who was conceived with us in the same holy font of baptism, and who is fed at the same divine table? To offend or hate him is to revolt against your Father, and to respect neither the common womb of baptism in which you lay, nor all the binding ties of the blood of a God, withwhich you are nourished.

10. Christ has established his church one, and will have all its members most closely cemented together, as he and his Father are one. "That they be one, as we are." John xvii. 11. He would have his church to be the most perfect and the most united body that can be. He is pleased to be himself its head. "He is the head of his body, the church." Col. i. 18. We are all his members. He who sins against charity, sacrilegiously

rends his mystical body, and injures his divine head. "Ye are the body of Christ, and members of his members." 1 Cor. xii. 27. We are fellow-members with each other. We have the most strict, the most sacred, and the most perfect and inviolable connections and ties with one another. "As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Rom. xii. 4, 5. We see that in a natural body, if the foot be pricked with a thorn, all the other members take their part in the pain, and immediately conspire to relieve the afflicted member. "If the toe be trod upon, the tongue cries out: You tread upon me," says St. Austin. One might ask it: Why, O tongue, do you complain? you are not touched or hurt; it is only the foot. But it suffers, when any part of its body suffers. We, who are fellow-members in the mystical body of Christ, are bound to behave towards one another in the same manner that members do in the natural body. If we saw in this latter the members fighting against one another, the hands to tear the face, the teeth to bite the arm, or the feet to kick each other, we should conclude the person to be mad, and should bind him down in bedlam. It is a greater extravagance in the mystical body, that one member should deceive, cheat, beat, tear, or backbite another; yet this happens daily, and no one is surprized at it. Instead of compassion, how many feel a secret joy of envy or jealousy at the disgrace of another? Even their condolence is often only treachery and dissimulation.

11. Christ's character was that of the Prince of Peace, as he had been styled by the prophets. This the angels sang at his birth. This the primitive Christians observed as their proper badge, when, as foretold, the lamb and the wolf lay quietly together. "The whole number of the believers had but one heart and one soul." Acts iv. 32. The heathens, beholding their charity towards one another, cried out in astonishment; "See, how they love one another!" Tertull. apol. c. 39. They loved even their persecuting enemies, judges, tormentors, and executioners; they were always ready to receive with joy the loss of goods, friends, and country, and to lay down their lives for the love of Christ, and for the spiritual good of their neighbours. In famines, pestilences, and other calamities they spared nothing, and exposed their lives to assist the poor and strangers. This was the spirit which Christ asked for his followers. This was the precept he enjoined them, the virtue which he principally inculcated to them. "I give you a new commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." John xv. 12. This lesson his apostles never ceased to repeat. "But above all have mutual charity, which is the bond of perfection." Col. iv. 14. "Above all having constant charity in yourselves." 1 Peter iv. 8. "Beloved, thus God loved us, and we must love one another." 1 John iv. 17. This apostle of love, being grown old, reduced all his instructions, to the congregations, to this one; "My children, love one another." And when the faithful began to be tired, and to desire to hear some other lesson, "he returned an answer worthy of John: Because it is the command of God; and if it alone be practised, it is enough." St. Jerom in Gal. c. 6.

12. This charity is its own present reward. "What in the world can be more pleasant or more happy? What more wonderful than that men from different parts of the world should be so concentrated by a perfect similarity of manners, that there seems to be but one soul in many bodies,

and those bodies should be the instruments of one mind." St. Basil, Constit. Monast. c. 19. This is the special gift of God. "God, who makes people of the same conduct live in the house." Ps. lxvii. 6. The serenity and peace of mind which this charity brings, is the most invaluable temporal blessing. Moreover, love is the life and soul of the world; it is the sun, the salt, and the staff of life. All is dark and comfortless without the light of this cheering fire. Every thing is flat and insipid, until this seasons it and gives it a grateful relish. All is feeble and tottering without its firm support. "A faithful friend is a strong defence, the medicine of life; and he that findeth him, findeth a great treasure." Eccles. vi. 14, 16. "A brother helped by a brother is like a strong city." Prov. xviii. 19. "It is hard to break a triple cord." Eccles. iv. 12. Scilurus, the father of eighty children, lying on his death-bed, gave to them one after another a quiver full of arrows, bidding them strive who would break it; every one had fatigued himself in vain, when the father, taking the arrows one by one, easily broke them all; giving them to understand that they would be invincible as long as they remained unanimous, but would be weak and an easy prey to every one, if separated. Plutarch, l. de amore fratr. apud Stobæum, c. 84.

13. But the spiritual and eternal advantages of holy charity are infinitely superior to those that are temporal. By charity, and by bearing with others, and forgiving injuries, we move God to bear with us in patience, and to pardon us easily our sins and daily transgressions. "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." 1 Pet. iv. 8. It renders a soul most agreeable to God, who chooses her abode in her with a particular complacency. "If we love one another, God abideth in us, and our charity is perfect." 1 John iv. 32. It makes us the children of God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, or the lovers of peace; because they shall be called the children of God." Mat. v. By it we are living images of God, and imitate him. "Be ye imitators of God, as his most dear children, and walk in love." Ephes. v. 1. It is the property of children to imitate and resemble their parents. This is not a general rule as to earthly parents, who sometimes set bad example, which their children are bound by no means to follow. But God is the most perfect model, which we can set before our eyes for our imitation: he is the infallible rule, the sovereign reason, the supreme law; in following him it is impossible we should be deceived. Now in what are we able and bound to imitate God our heavenly Father? Not in his omnipotence, in his creation of the world, or other great attributes, which are peculiar to himself and incommunicable to any other; but it is in virtues, of which our soul is capable, and in which we are to bear his image, particularly in love. By this we are the followers of God, and show ourselves to be his sons; as divisions, slanders, enmities, and the like are the marks of the children of the devil. "Love your enemies; do good to those that hate you; and pray for those that persecute and calumniate you," says our blessed Redeemer. Mat. v. 44. He adds the reason: "That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who makes the sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and the rain to fall upon the just and unjust." There is no surer mark that we are the sons of God, than to imitate him in doing good to all men. All creatures pronounce against those, who are not in this disposition, a sentence of condemnation, written with as many rays of the sun, drops of water, and other natural gifts, as God bestows on us. If he had not loved us

when we were his enemies, we should never have had the happiness of being his friends, which we shall lose if we cease to imitate him in loving all men.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

ON THE ORDER OF CHARITY.

1. We are bound to love all men by the precept of holy charity. All men are the images of God; all men are our brethren; every man is our neighbour in the sense of the gospel. Yet there is a certain order to be observed in charity. God is the lover and the author of order in all things. Hence the spouse says: "He hath set his charity in order in me." Cant. ii. 4. We are bound to love God in the first place, and above all things; "more than father and mother;" Mat. x.; and more than ourselves. We must be ready to lose goods, friends, life, and all things, rather than to be separated from, or to offend him. 1 Cor. xiii. Our charity also is to be regular, and rightly ordered with regard to our neighbours. It commands us to prefer the necessary spiritual good of our own souls to every consideration of the advantage of others. "For it is never lawful to do evil, that good may come from it." Rom. iii. Though it were, by an impossible supposition, to save the whole world, it would not be lawful to commit the least sin, or to renounce habitual grace, or to forfeit the state of loving God to eternity in the next world. God has enjoined to every one a particular trust and care of his own soul; with a command that in all things he glorify him, and keep his holy law himself. The very precept of charity is, that we love our neighbour as ourselves. Therefore, we are bound to love ourselves in the first place; for the love of ourselves is the rule of the love of our neighbour. Whence St. Austin says, Serm. 369. n. 5. t. p. 1455: "First learn to love thyself; and so love thy neighbour as thyself," "He that is faithless to himself, whom will he be good to?" Eccles. xiv. 5. We are commanded to love others as ourselves, *i. e.* to desire the same good both corporal and spiritual to them, which we do to ourselves; but not in the same order. The prudent virgins refused to give their necessary oil to the foolish. Mat. xxii. 9.

2. But we are bound to prefer our neighbour's spiritual life to our own corporal life. For Christ commands us to love our neighbour, as he has loved us, who died for us. John xv. 12.; Ephes. v. 2. He hath laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 1 John iii. 16. Hence we are bound to lay down our life, if it be necessary, to procure baptism to an infant that is dying without that sacrament; or, to instruct a dying infidel, who desires it, or is disposed for it, in the necessary mysteries of the Christian faith. A pastor of souls is obliged, at the expense of his life, not to leave his flock destitute in time of pestilence, famine, or war. Also he is bound, at the hazard of his life, to administer the necessary sacraments to a person dying, who is not capable of supplying the want of them by perfect contrition, and who has been probably guilty of mortal sin. It is an act of heroic charity for any person to expose his life to procure to another any spiritual help, though not

absolutely necessary to salvation. But we are obliged to prefer our own corporal life to that of another. "If any one throw away his own life to preserve that of another, this is not to love his neighbour as himself, but more than himself, which violates the rule of true charity," says St. Austin, l. de mendac. c. 9, except the other person be the prince or some public person, whose life is necessary to the public peace, or great advantage of the commonwealth; for charity obliges men to prefer the public to their own private good. It is also a lawful and an heroic act of virtue for a man to lay down his own life to save that of another, through any supernatural motive of virtue, as St. Thomas teaches; *e. g.* for fear the other be not prepared for death, whereas he is careful to dispose himself; or because the other is more useful to the commonwealth, or to the souls of others; or out of gratitude, mercy, or the like. Hence the charity of dying for another man is commended by Christ as heroical: "No one has greater love," &c. John xv.; and the apostle: "Perhaps, for the good we may brave death;" Rom. 5, which we see confirmed by the examples of many saints.

3. Among neighbours we are bound to prefer, first, a parent; secondly, a wife; thirdly, children; fourthly, relations, according to their degree; fifthly, benefactors, and those on whom we have conferred great benefits, by which they become our creatures or work in some sense, as St. Thomas observes. But this order may be somewhat changed by certain circumstances; for, if a father or son had attempted the other's life, or been guilty of some excessive unnatural behaviour, he would no longer be necessarily to be regarded in the same rank; though a father or son can never totally forfeit it. Again, those who excel in sanctity, deserve a degree of preference in some measure; and we are always to rejoice in the greater felicity of those who are more virtuous.

From these principles we learn when we may be bound to expose our own lives to rescue others from drowning or from the flames; viz., if we prudently fear that they are in mortal sin, and hope that we are disposed for death by charity; or if they be public persons, on whose life the safety of the commonwealth depends. But persons, who by their own free choice and malice are in danger of an unhappy death, from which they can recover themselves, as those who fight in a duel, or in an unjust war, are not necessarily to be treated as persons in extreme spiritual necessity.

From these same rules we learn whom we are to prefer in saving from shipwreck, hunger, &c., and out of what motives it would be lawful and an heroic act of charity to leave the only loaf in a famine, the only plank in a shipwreck, the only horse in a flight from barbarians.

4. We are obliged by the law of charity to love our enemies; for they are still our neighbours. "He who hates his brother is a murderer." 1 John iii. "But I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to those that hate you," &c. Mat. v. But the impious and enemies are not to be loved in the same degree with friends; nor are we obliged to show them the special marks of friendship, but only those which we owe to all men in general, as St. Thomas says; who takes notice that the charity of friends is more excellent, because founded in stricter ties; but that of enemies is more heroic and more difficult. We owe charity to the greatest sinners, whom we love, whilst we detest their iniquities, as St. Augustin says in Psal. 138. This charity towards enemies obliges us to an interior sincere affection of the heart. By this we must rejoice in their virtue and

just prosperity, and feel a grief and compassion in their afflictions and losses. It is, however, lawful to wish them some temporal humiliation, which may move them to repentance; but this wish or prayer must proceed from charity, without any mixture of revenge, which easily lurks in the heart under blinds; on which account such acts are not to be easily made, especially by the tepid or lukewarm.

5. Besides the interior affection of the will, we owe to enemies all general exterior marks of friendship and good offices, though not those which are extraordinary and due only to friends. But even these are of obligation as to the disposition of the heart, in case they should be in grievous necessity; and in time of a strong temptation to revenge or hatred; to resist which we should make a fervent act of charity, as by praying sincerely for the person; or, if he be present, by showing him some particular respect or civility. This usually ought to be done, when we first receive some grievous affront, or when we meet an adversary, at whose sight we feel our heart to recoil. It is to be often repeated, when necessary to root out of the heart some inveterate hatred. Such special marks of friendship are also often necessary to prevent scandal, lest others should think that there subsists something of hatred or antipathy; also, when by them there are hopes of gaining the other to peace and charity. He who affronted another, is obliged to ask pardon, and to make satisfaction, as by asking pardon in public, if he had injured the other publicly by any contumelious words, &c. He is to purpose this, before he goes to pray; "before he offers his gift at the altar;" Mat. v., and to execute it on the first opportunity he can procure. But a superior is never to ask pardon in a manner contrary to his authority. It is an obligation to pardon the offender, who sincerely asks it; unless prudence shows it ought to be delayed to serve as a chastisement; for too easy a pardon of an adultery, fornication, &c. would be a scandalous connivance.

6. It is lawful to demand satisfaction of an injury, and a reparation of honour, providing it be done without the least spirit of revenge. But it is not lawful to demand it by law, if the other offer to make it fully; nor is it allowed in any way to distress him for it by the least unnecessary grievance or charges.

It is not always forbidden to pursue our right in a court of judicature; and it may sometimes be a point of necessity or of obligation, especially in those who are only administrators for others. A man may also owe it to his family and to necessary self-defence. But then lawsuits are always a great evil, and always to be avoided, unless the necessity be absolutely indispensable. St. Paul says: "A servant of God must have no strife." 2 Tim. ii. 24. "Already indeed there is a fault among you, that you have lawsuits one with another. Why do not you rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" 1 Cor. vi. 7. He complains grievously that they went to law even before heathen judges; they, who at the last day were to judge the fallen angels; and reproaches them that they did not compromise all matters among themselves, or find arbitrators among their brethren, who could reconcile their differences. He bids them, by way of reproach, to set them to judge, who are the most despised in the church. "I speak to your shame. Is it so that there is not among you any one wise man, that is able to judge between his brethren?" 1 Cor. vi. 5. The first great evil in lawsuits is, that they generally arise from pride or covetousness, as St. James takes

notice: "From whence are wars and contentions among you? Come they not hence? from your concupiscences, which war in your members?" James iv. 1. The second evil in lawsuits is, that they are the general, and, among the tepid at least, almost unavoidable shipwrecks of Christian charity, the queen of all virtues. They are the sources, and to many persons the immediate occasions of innumerable sins against charity. The common phrases of men, engaged in such contests, are: he is a cheat, a rogue, and what not. If he be so, this is not to be divulged, till he is convicted in open court. But rash judgments, detractions, slanders, contumelies, &c. are the daily and almost hourly thoughts and discourses of such persons. Again, a forgetfulness of God, an insensibility to spiritual things, a great remissness in prayer and every spiritual duty, are the ordinary effects of this desolating evil.

7. How then must men behave who are obliged to sustain a lawsuit? They must be engaged in it only by compulsion. They must seek by all means to prevent it, and to bring their adversary to compromise matters, or at least to refer the points to an arbitration of mutual friends, or of prudent impartial persons. They must be sensible of the extreme spiritual dangers of sin, to which they expose themselves, their friends, their adversaries, their lawyers, and innumerable others; all which will be charged to the account of those who were the rash cause of these evils. They must remember what St. Francis of Sales used to say: If there be any one who keep due moderation in lawsuits, you may say that the process of his canonization is already made. They ought moreover to compute the loss of friends, of their precious time, and likewise of their money. The excessive expenses, even of those who gain a lawsuit, often put them much out of pocket. Christians are to add in the same scale the racking anxieties and fears, which are the ordinary attendants of lawsuits; the restless nights, the toilsome journeys, the tedious attendance and slavery, the bitter reproaches, the mortal trouble of mind, the incredible fatigues, &c. Let a thinking man call in a skilful arithmetician to cast up, if he be able, all these certain losses and evils on one side, even if he should gain his cause, which must be always uncertain; and then let him coolly sit down, and weigh with himself, what will be the amount of his gain in the end.

If he doth plead, he must take care to remember that he is a Christian; that he must avoid all rash suspicions and detractions; that he must not conceal any titles which can make justly against him, and favour his adversary; that he must love him sincerely, and show him all the marks, give him all the tokens of cordial friendship; and guard himself against all uncharitableness, all pride, all covetousness.

8. Every Christian sufficiently understands that charity forbids all anger, all desire of revenge, all enmity and hatred, which is an inveterate or continued ill-will. "Every man that hates his brother, is a murderer." 1 John iii. No injuries received, though ever so atrocious, or multiplied seventy-seven times; no opposition of interests or views, and still less no suggestions of pride, can ever excuse the malice of this sin. A Christian is bound to forgive others, as he hopes to be forgiven. Pride may cry out: It would be a blemish in my honour tamely to forgive. David acquired more honour by pardoning Saul in the cave than by all his victories. Cicero shows to Cæsar, that it was far more glorious in him to pardon his enemies than to wear the laurels of all his other triumphs. Detraction, whispering, slander, and contumely, are crimes against justice as well as

against charity. Contumely, or reproachful language used to a person's face, differs from detraction, as rapine does from private theft; *i. e.* it adds the circumstance and injury of open violence to that of injustice. The penitent is obliged to repair the injury done by contumely, by making a competent satisfaction, which may restore the honour that was wounded by the affront, as by asking pardon in a manner suitable to the circumstances of the affront, and the condition of the persons. A superior may do it sufficiently by greater marks of favour; and it seldom could be prudent, that he should expressly beg pardon of his inferior, which might often derogate from his authority.

9. It is not enough for the observance of this precept to refrain from insults; it obliges us to love, and to do good to our greatest enemies. It is a grievous transgression to refuse to speak to or salute another out of animosity, or to neglect any of the general and common duties of charity, which we owe to all; also to except enemies in general from alms or benefaction; much more to except any one in our prayers. It is our first obligation towards our neighbours to pray for them. "Pray for one another." James v. 16. Christ teaches us to pray, "Forgive us," not me. If we have our wants, our neighbours have also theirs. Moved with a fellow-feeling for their necessities, we must pray for them as well as for ourselves. If we owe any particular assistance to others, the first is prayer. A wife must pray for a husband; parents for children. You accuse your children of disobedience; perhaps, it is your fault, because you have never prayed for them with perseverance. St. Monica obtained by prayer the conversion of her son Austin. The best office which it is in our power to do others, is to pray for them. Nothing shows more our want of charity than our great forgetfulness to pray for others. This proves how little interest we take in their salvation. If any one had saved the life of our brother we should think ourselves much obliged to him, and should for ever extol his goodness; yet we have little anxiety for his eternal life. If we had a brother who stood arraigned for his estate and life, and the judge signified to us that he desired we should recommend our cause to him, could we be so indifferent as to amuse ourselves with trifles, and to make no application, to show no concern or regard for his anger, whilst the cause was depending? God, our tender and common Father, desires and admonishes us to intercede with him for our perishing brethren; yet we refuse to do it. What a confusion ought it to be to us to see St. Paul thank God so heartily for the conversion of souls, and pray so earnestly for them, besides all his pains, dangers, &c. for the same end? Yet we do nothing of all that, and nevertheless are so backward to pray for them; what answer shall we make to the reproaches of Christ at the last day? The injustice of our enemies ought to move us to greater compassion for their spiritual miseries, and oblige us to pray for them with more earnestness.

10. We must bear the insults and injustice of enemies with meekness and patience. We must learn from Christ how we are to love our enemies and all sinful men, if we desire to be his followers. How did he love Judas, who was his treacherous enemy, and a most abominable sinner? How good, how courteous, how meek was Jesus to him, whom he knew to be the worst of devils? He nevertheless made him an apostle, and sent him to preach with the rest of the apostles. He gave him a power of casting out devils and of working miracles, and he showed him

the same kindness, in words and actions, that he did to the other apostles. He washed his feet, he fed him with his precious blood, and preached to him as he did to his other apostles. He did not reprehend him openly; he did not miscall him; he never despised him; never spake ill of him. When Judas betrayed him with a kiss, he called him his friend, and this not by flattery or counterfeiting; but in sincere love and charity. A true lover of Jesus becomes so patient, so humble, so peaceable, that, whatsoever harm or wrong he suffers from others, he never despises them, never judges ill of them; but prays for them in his heart, pities them more tenderly than any other, who never did him any harm; feels his affection more sensible towards them, and more fervently desires their salvation, on account of the danger in which he sees them, and of the spiritual profit which accrues to him from their insults.

11. Bear the affronts, harshness, peevishness, rusticity, or simplicity, and ignorance of others. Be ready to serve all as far as lies in your power; be courteous and affable to all. If any one desire to speak to you, let him be of what condition he will, let him not wait: but consider how ready and glad you would be to speak to an angel of heaven coming to you? and be as cheerful and as ready to speak to your neighbour, who is God's creature, thy brother, and one who perhaps, by your means will be made a saint. Though you be at your devotions, break them off; this is not to leave God for man, but to find him in your neighbour, whom before you sought in prayer. If he come in trouble and affliction, hear and comfort him; if for alms, endeavour to assist him; at least speak mildly to him; but if he be a spiritual man, hear him humbly, and edify yourself by him; if his discourse be worldly or idle, answer little, and he will soon be weary and go away.

DISCOURSE XIX.

ON FRATERNAL CORRECTION.

1. An essential condition of the charity which we owe to our neighbours is, that it be effective, and show itself by actions. Love, if barren of works, is reduced to false compliments of words, and to an empty hypocrisy; for it cannot be sincere and effective, unless it produce its natural fruits. How can a man love his brother, if he has no concern to succour him in his necessities? "If a brother or sister be naked, and want daily food, and one of you say to them: Go in peace, be you warmed and filled; yet give them not those things, that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?" James ii. 15, 16. We, therefore owe to our neighbour the exterior succours and good offices of charity, and these both corporal and spiritual. They are of the strictest precept, if the grievous necessities of others call for them: and they are always excellent acts of this virtue. Men generally seem more sensible of this obligation with regardto corporal alms; but many are entirely strangers to the precept of exercising spiritual works of charity. This is indeed a delicate and nice point of morality; and we meet with rocks on both sides to be shunned, but which are, perhaps, little understood. It is necessary that a duty of daily practice and obligation

should be perfectly understood, and cleared of the intricacies and difficulties that occur in it.

2. Both zeal for the honour of God, and charity to our neighbour, oblige us to procure him all spiritual succour and comfort. Zeal; inasmuch as our first duty to God obliges us to study in all things to promote his divine honour, to labour and pray that he be known, loved, and served by all his creatures, a homage which his infinite perfections claim. We are bound to pray: "Hallowed be thy Name." If a dutiful subject desire that his king may reign happy, and that his subjects obey and serve him, how much more is a servant of God bound to pray and to labour, as much as in him lies, that every man may know and serve his God? He is the master of all creatures, why then is not his Name adored by all? Why is there a corner of the earth where he is not known and served? Especially why are any found among his own children who ungratefully revile and offend him? We ought, at this reflection, as St. Bernard says, to cry out: "Behold now in peace the bitterest of all my bitterness. Bitter in the persecution of Pagans; more bitter in the fury of heretics; but most bitter in the conduct of the family." This reflection drew floods of tears from the eyes of the faithful servants of God; this moved many to lay down their lives, and to suffer all torments, to labour to prevent one sin, or to promote the love of God in one soul. How pathetically does St. Teresa conjure all her spiritual daughters, never to cease weeping for the offences and injuries which blind sinners daily commit against the infinite goodness of God! l. de via perfectionis, c. 3, l. de castello animæ, Mans. 7. c. 1.

3. The same consideration calls also for our tears, on the motive of charity towards our neighhour. We are bound to love him as ourselves, and to endeavour to procure him the same good we desire for ourselves. This holds in the first place with regard to his soul. Christ commands us to love our neighbour even as Christ has loved us, who died for us. John xv. 12. "He hath laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John iii. 15. By this rule, as divines agree, we are bound to expose and sacrifice our corporal life, or whatever temporal advantages we may possess, if this be necessary to the advantage of one other soul. Indeed one immortal soul is greater than the whole material world. Although a man shall have bestowed an immense treasure of money on the poor, he has done nothing equal to him who has contributed to the salvation of a soul. This is a greater alms than ten thousand talents, than this whole wide world, how great soever it appears to the eye; for a man is more precious than the whole world. St. Chrys. or 3, contra Jud. &c. Do not say it is but one soul, says the same father; but remember it is a soul for which all things visible were made, for whom divine laws, statutes, punishments, and eternal rewards were decreed; a thousand miracles and wonders wrought, and mysteries accomplished; for whom God did not spare his only Son. Consider how great a price was paid for one, and despise not her salvation. Hom. contra ludos et theat. t. 6. p. 276. ed. Mont. How earnestly did Moses, Isaiah, St. Paul, and all the prophets and saints reprehend and admonish sinners, grieving for their chastisements more than the blind sinners did for themselves, even amidst their miseries? They loved them, though sinners, more tenderly than a father does his own children; for the sentiment of divine charity far surpasses the bonds of nature. They wept, lamented, and mourned for them even

unto death, and made themselves their voluntary companions to follow them to captivity, chains, &c. St. Chrysost. Præf. in Isa. t. 6. p. 1, 2. ed. Mont. They always looked upon it as the greatest happiness to suffer the most cruel torments and death, to procure the salvation or even the least spiritual advantage of one soul. This is the precept of Christ, and the order of charity established even by the law of nature, if the spiritual necessity of others under our eyes require it.

4. If we are obliged to lay down our lives for the salvation of others, are we not bound to save them, when we can do it by an admonition, an exhortation, a seasonable correction? Only a Cain could say: "Am I my brother's guardian?" Gen. iv. 9. What have I to do with my brother's soul? Is it my concern what he does, or what becomes of him? This, I say, can be the language only of one who has utterly divested himself of the bowels of charity. "The ass falls and is soon raised up again; a soul perishes, and no one attends to it." St. Bern. l. 4. de consid. c. 6. It is an oracle of the Holy Ghost, that "God has committed to each of us the care of his neighbour." Eccles. xvii. It is then an evident divine precept, and an article of our holy faith, that, though the laity are not to usurp the ministry of the clergy, or to commence preachers, all men may be bound under the guilt of mortal sin, in certain circumstances, to admonish and correct sinners, when by that means they may avert the offence of God, and the grievous prejudice of their neighbour's souls. "Reprove a friend, lest he may not have understood, and say: I did it not; or if he did it, that he may do it no more. Reprove thy neighbour." Eccles. xix. 13. "Hate not thy brother in thy heart; but publicly reprove him, lest thou shouldst be involved in his sin." Lev. xix. 17. Christ repeats this law, Mat. xviii. 15: "If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and reprove him." He mentions the sin of injuries for all sin; for by *against thee*, we are to understand, before thee, in thy presence, as St. Thomas observes. "If a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness." Gal. iv. 1.

5. Not only the obligation, but the great advantages of fraternal correction greatly recommend to us the exercise of this virtue. By it we promote the divine honour, and check the torrents of sin which are broke loose upon the earth like a deluge. What more suitable satisfaction can we pay to God for our past sins? We have offended and dishonoured him. By correcting others from sin let us study to repair his honour, which we have injured. By the same charity, if our brother hear us, we shall have gained him; as Christ says, Mat. xviii.; *i. e.* as he fell by sin, we shall be instruments to raise him to spiritual life; a far more honourable, more glorious, and more advantageous work than if we had restored his corporal life after death. For by this we save his soul. "If any man of you err from the truth, and one convert him; he must know, that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." James v. 20. What could be more glorious? what more profitable either to our brother, or to ourselves? To our brother; who is by our admonishing saved from eternal death and hell. Christ is the Redeemer and Saviour of men by the great mystery of his incarnation and death. And, as God often makes use of creatures or second causes as his instruments, so, even in this greatest of his works, does he vouchsafe to make use of us, to contribute towards the salvation of souls. What can be more profitable to our own souls,

to which belong the crown and the eternal joy of so great a work? Could God himself receive any thing from a creature, it is here he would be said to do it; for the eternal praises of a soul freed from hell, and made a saint by our endeavours under his grace, accrue to him through us. Thus, also, do we cover and efface our own sins. "Charity covers a multitude of sins." 1 Peter iv. If he who harbour a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the recompense of a just man, how much greater a reward will he receive, who has raised a soul from sin? The spiritual works of mercy and charity far excel those that are corporal.

6. If fraternal correction be a point of such great importance, and of indispensable obligation, it behoves every one to be instructed how and in what circumstances this duty is to be complied with. First, every father, master of a family, husband, magistrate, prince, or other superior is bound to correct all under his care or jurisdiction, by a much severer duty not only of charity, but also of justice, because he has received authority from God over others for this end, and with this obligation in the first place, that he employ it to promote his divine honour and service. Moreover, a superior is bound to watch over, and to inquire into the faults of subjects, and to examine their actions and conduct. "What excuse can a shepherd allege, who has suffered the wolf to destroy his sheep without his knowledge?" says St. Greg. m. l. 2, ep. 52. Secondly, a superior is obliged to correct an inferior, unless greater evils are feared, even where he sees little, nay no hopes of amendment, and where other means relative to this precept are wanting. Hence God so severely threatens remiss pastors on this account by Ezechiel; and St. Paul said, "I am innocent of the blood of all, for I have not failed to announce every counsel of God to you." Acts xix. Upon which St. Gregory writes: "If he had not announced them, he would be guilty of their blood." Hom. ii. in Ezech. A pastor also is obliged to continue his admonitions, opportunely, importunely; and also, if it be necessary, to chastise sin in a salutary manner. No one is allowed to strike or punish another for a fault, though ever so notorious, unless he be a superior, who has jurisdiction and authority, which is always derived from God. But a superior is bound to exercise his power even in chastising sin, when circumstances require it: "for he does not wear a sword without cause." Rom. xiii. 4.

7. Private persons are bound not to inquire or pry into the actions of others; which it would even be sinful for them to do, though for the sake of fraternal correction; because they have no authority or jurisdiction over others; and such a prying inquisitive conduct is infinitely odious and troublesome to others, opens the door to rash suspicions, dissensions, and anger, and disturbs the peace of the whole neighbourhood. This disposition is an effect of pride and of a want of true charity. St. Austin observes, Serm. 16, de verbis Domini: "The Lord admonisheth us not to pass over the sins of our neighbours, but to correct them if we see them; not by prying to find some thing to reprove." For, as St. Thomas says, 2. 2œ. q. 33, a. 2, ad 3: "We should otherwise act as spies on the conduct of others, against the known rule, Seek not impiety in the house of the just man, nor disturb his peace." Prov. xxiv. 15.

Nor are private persons obliged to fraternal correction, where the following conditions do not meet. First, that the fault be certain. To correct others upon light suspicions is to disturb their peace, and ordinarily the way to do harm, and no good. "Before thou inquire, reprove no

man: and when thou hast inquired, reprove justly." Eccles. xi. c. 7. Secondly, the fault must be of sufficient importance. Usually to correct others for ordinary venial sins is to lose our authority in correcting, and exasperate, unless it be done by a superior; which is not to be done for trifles, that seem faults to us, but may appear to others innocent. A man who would bring all others to his own rule, would resemble a dancing-master, who should pretend to correct the gait of every body he met in the streets. To love to correct and advise without sufficient necessity, is to betray a secret pride and self-conceit.

> "When things go ill, each fool dares to advise,
> And if more happy, thinks himself more wise;
> All wretchedly deplore the present state,
> And that advice seems best, that comes too late."
>
> SIR CH. SIDNEY.

Thirdly, if it be prudently hoped that the sinner will himself repent, or will be sufficiently admonished of his duty by another, the obligation ceases. Also, if there be no hopes of doing good by an admonition. But here we must except a superior, who is still obliged to correct the party, that he may deliver his own soul at least, and discharge his duty; Ezech. xxxiii.; or when scandal would otherwise follow from the bad example; or in blasphemies, to repair the injury done to the divine Name. Even if the hope of doing good do not much exceed the fear of the contrary, the correction is often better omitted. Hence strangers are not to be corrected in the streets, except where the danger of scandal be feared, or it be necessary for the sake of God's honour. Fourthly, a proper time and place are to be sought; without this it would be a poison instead of a remedy; as if it were attempted whilst the person was in a passion, &c. Hence the Wise Man often inculcates that it be done in season. Lastly, that we do not expose ourselves to any very great danger or loss of life, reputation, or estate by it; but lesser evils are to be despised; nay, life itself, if a neighbour were dying in extreme necessity of such a correction, and it were very probable that he would be saved by it.

8. An inferior ought never to correct a superior by harsh words, contrary to the respect due to him, but only by intreaties and advice offered with due modesty. Ordinarily it is best to admonish superiors by our manners and good example, as St. Monica gained her husband to God. "She made it her study to gain him to thee by her example."* St. Aug. Conf. As fraternal correction is a difficult task, we ought not to execute it in any matter of moment, without first recommending the case to God by prayer; and we must take care to accompany it with a tender charity, mildness, and humility. St. Paul puts us in mind of this, Gal. vi. 1: "You that are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." The remedy is always bitter, and requires great art in the dressing.

9. The pride of man's heart is inclined to recoil at correction. Herod respected and honoured John the Baptist, Mark vi., heard him willingly, and did many things by his advice; but, when he admonished him of his double adultery and incest, he cast him into prison, and cut off his head. After Christ had attracted the hearts of his hearers by his divine doctrine, by reproving their vices he incensed them against him; "by hearing

* Sategit illum lucrati tibi moribus suis,

these things, all in the synagogue were moved to anger, and they rose, &c., that they might kill him." Luke iv. 28, 29. So true it is, that truth produces hatred. Nothing is a greater proof that a man is disposed to listen to divine grace, than if he receive well a reproof, is thankful to his friend who gave it, and endeavours to profit by it. "A reproof availeth more with a wise man than a hundred stripes with a fool." Prov. xvii. 10. The Holy Ghost gives this as the most sensible mark between a soul disposed to penitence, and one hardened in pride and sin. "He that teacheth a scorner, doth an injury to himself; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himself a blot. Rebuke not a scorner, lest he hate thee. Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee." Prov. ix. 7, 8. To hate correction and advice is the most dreadful symptom in a soul. "He who hateth correction, shall die." Prov. xv. 10. "He that rejecteth instruction despiseth his own soul;" v. 32: "but he that yieldeth to reproof, possesseth understanding." Ib. "The man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed; and health shall not follow him." Prov. xxix. 1. Is it not the part of a friend to put us in mind that our face is dirty, or clothes torn? and do not we thank him for his good offices? Much more grateful ought we be to him, who admonishes us of blots in our soul. Nothing is more wholesome for the cure of our pride; nothing more useful for the discovery and remedy of all our spiritual evils.

However harshly the draught be administered, we ought to receive it always with gratitude and joy for the benefit we may receive from it. "A wise and well instructed man will not murmur when reproved." Eccles. x. 28. But, when we admonish or correct others, let us do it with mildness, which alone gains the heart, whilst harshness shuts it. "Instruct a man of this character in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself." Gal. vi. It was a saying of St. Francis of Sales: "I have seen innumerable multitudes of flies taken with a little drop of honey, whilst a large quantity of vinegar could never attract one." Nathan reminds David of his sin, introducing his mild rebuke with a parable.

10. Moreover, an order is to be observed in fraternal correction; which Christ expresses, Mat. xviii: "If your brother offend you, go and reprove him in private; if he will not hear thee, take one or two persons with thee:—if still he will not listen to thee, denounce him to the church." This order is conformable to the law of nature, which commands us to preserve the reputation of our neighbour as much as possible. Wherefore, if a private admonition suffice, no witness must be made use of. Unless a person foresee that his own private advice will not have sufficient weight, he ought not to begin by employing some person of great authority.

If then you hear of the fall of any person, make haste to open his eyes and lift him up again. "Run, child, make haste, raise thy friend; close not thine eyes, nor shut thy eye-lids." Prov. vi. 3, 4.

Correct the proud and obstinate with severity, as St. Paul says of the Cretans: "Rebuke them sharply." Tit. i. 13. And, 1 Thess. v. 14: "Rebuke them that are irregular and disorderly."

The most invincible meekness was the characteristic of our blessed Redeemer, under which he is represented by Isaiah and the evangelists: "He shall not contend, nor cry out, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. The bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not

extinguish;" Mat. xii. 19, 20; using a proverb to express his sweetness; his dislike to contention, noise, and bawling; and his gentleness in words and actions. With the most patient silence he bore insults and the most atrocious blasphemies. How comes it then, that he uses such harsh expressions in reproving the vices of the Scribes and Pharisees? Does he depart from or forget his spirit of meekness? By no means. Zeal and charity obliged him to use that language in correcting sinners, whose character was pride and obstinacy.

DISCOURSE XX.

ON ALMS.

1. CHARITY obliges us to afford our neighbour the succour which he stands in need of for his corporal and spiritual necessities. The latter indeed are of far greater importance, of a superior order, and extending their efforts to eternity. But the wants of the body are more sensible, and call upon us for our compassion and relief. There is no duty, no obligation, whether in the law of nature, or of the gospel, more evident or more universally agreed on than the precept of alms; yet so strange is the blindness of avarice, that there is scarcely any precept more transgressed, nor any law which men more shamefully study to elude and misconstrue. Yet the neglect or violation of it is a crime that entails eternal damnation on a soul, and is punished in a particular manner above other sins, with a subtraction of the divine graces and benefits in this life.

2. Many seem to look upon alms-deeds as a virtue of supererogation, or which is left to the free choice and discretion of every one. In this they betray a great ignorance of their religion, and of the first duties of morality: for by the very law of nature, God lays on us the strictest precept of giving alms to the poor; and it is upon this condition that he has given to the rich their treasures. God is the God of the poor no less than of the rich; he equally created both, and provides for the necessities of both. It would be to charge God with injustice and impeach his holy providence to imagine that he could mean or allow such a division of the goods of this life, that the poor should be left destitute of a necessary subsistence by the rule of his dispensation. Such a blasphemy cannot enter the thoughts of any one, who believes in the all-wise, merciful, and holy Providence. How then has he supplied the wants of the poor? By the hands of the rich. He has heaped upon them his temporal blessings in abundance; but with a strict obligation that they faithfully relieve the needy. Here we see the secret of his holy providence in the precept of alms: "Let your opulence supply their wants." 1 Cor. viii. 14. Thus the rich have nothing superfluous, nothing to throw away in extravagance, sensuality, or vanity; nothing to hoard up. Nor are the poor left to perish in distress. "But that equality may have place, as it is written, He that has much does not abound, he that receives little is not in want." 1 Cor. viii. By this admirable wisdom has he appointed a just provision for all, and has furnished both the rich and the poor with the proper means of their sanctification. The rich, by the distribution of their wealth for the relief

of the necessitous; the poor, by patience under the inconveniences, humiliations, and sufferings to which that painful state of want, dependance, and contempt subjects them. See then, you who enjoy the treasures of the world, the law of God in bestowing them upon you. He remembers that he has other children, of whom he must take care; children no less dear to him, no less noble in his eyes; he has so far honoured and favoured you as to appoint you his steward to provide for them. But then, he will demand of you an exact account, and require that you pay him the tribute of his gifts, that you honour him with this homage. "The faithful and prudent servant, whom the Lord has appointed over his family, that he may give them in time a measure of wheat." Luke xii. The poor are a part of God's family; you are only his steward to provide for their wants, for he is the common Father of all, and will revenge severely this contempt of his authority, and neglect of his darling children, whom their necessities have commended to us.

3. From this principle we understand how the fathers accuse those rich of theft and sacrilege, who neglect to give sufficient alms to the poor. "The bread which you waste, belongs to the poor; the cloak you lay up in your wardrobe, the shoes that rot in your house, belong to him who is barefoot. Therefore you injure as many persons as it is in your power to relieve." St. Basil, Serm. 4. "But you will say, what injury do I to any man by keeping what is my own? Pray, how came they to be yours? You came naked into the world, and you shall go naked out of it. Whence came the good things you possess? If you say that they are the presents of fortune, you must be a wicked creature, neither to acknowledge the goodness of Providence, nor to thank your benefactor. If you say that God sent them, I would ask you why he sent them? Do you question his justice? Why are you wallowing in riches, while your neighbour perishes for want? The only reason to be assigned for this is, that he would have you receive the reward of an honest steward, and he should be crowned for his patience." Id. Serm. 5. "You call the man thief, who steals a coat; what name does he deserve who refuses to clothe the naked when he can?" Id. Hom. 6, &c. "It is as great a crime to refuse necessaries to the indigent as to rob the rich." St. Ambrose, Serm. 81, t. 5, p. 898. "You give not from your own, but from the common stock. The world belongs to all, not exclusively to the rich. You pay a debt, not a gratuity." Id. l. de Naboth. c. 12. See St. Maximus, Serm. 7, t. 2, p. 553, &c.; St. Chrysost. Conc. 2; de Lazaro, St. Bernard, &c. "Defraud not the poor of his alms, hear his intreaties, and pay your debt." Eccl. iv. 8. The earth affords him not a subsistence. God has provided for him by assigning him a patrimony on your superfluity. He commanded tenderness even to brutes; whence he forbade the ox to be muzzled, who was treading the corn, &c. "The just man considers the nature of the brute creatures, but the wicked are cruel." Prov. xii. 10.

4. God renewed this precept in his positive law to the Jews: "I command thee to open thy hand to thy poor indigent brother." Deut. xv. 11. "This was the crime of Sodom; they opened not the hand to the poor and indigent." Ezech. xvi. 49. But in the new law, which is properly the law of charity, this precept of alms-deeds is enforced with particular energy. Christ inculcates it in the strongest terms; the sermons and writings of the apostles were a continued echo of the same doctrine; all the fathers and pastors of the church vehemently press this obligation;

and the saints made the heroic practice of this admirable virtue the rule of their conduct, looking upon it as their duty to strip themselves of all things to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry. Our blessed Redeemer commands, that by mercy we resemble our heavenly Father. "Be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful." We cannot be entitled to the crown of heaven, if we are not the children of God. "He has given us a title to become the children of God." John i. 12. And to be the sons of God we must represent his image in ourselves, and be the copies of him who is the Father of mercies, and the Father of the poor. He created us out of nothing; gave us our being, these heavens and this earth, with all the other gifts of nature and grace which we enjoy, out of pure goodness and bounty; but he exacts of us that we imitate his beneficence towards our fellow-creatures. This is the great and sublime original, which we are commanded to copy after. "The charitable man is truly the image of God," says Clemens of Alexandria.

Christ also has shown himself in his mortal life as a model for imitation. "He went about relieving and healing." Acts x.

5. Our divine Saviour teaches the same precept, by always inculcating that we are only stewards and dispensers of the temporal goods with which we are entrusted. Our Lord is compared by him to a master who is gone into a foreign land, soon to return, and call us to give an account of our stewardship. Suppose a great prince should, during his absence, leave his estates in the hands of his eldest son; but with an express order that he should take care of his family according to their dignity; instead of which this son should appropriate the whole revenue to his own use, and to feed his extravagances, what would be the chastisement due to his crimes? Would such a father be satisfied, if upon his return he found him lodged in palaces, served in rich plate, attended by troops of servants, feasting on dainties, and rioting in superfluous pleasures and vanities, whilst his brothers were left abandoned by him, some starving naked on the high-way, others sick in the public hospitals, destitute of every succour or comfort, others in prison or in slavery for debt? How justly would they cry out for justice against the cruelty of him, who not only abandoned them to such distress; but was deaf to the daily cries and complaints, by which they never ceased to implore his compassion? Doubtless the father would restore them to their birth-right, and would disinherit and cast into chains the unfaithful and ungrateful steward and eldest brother. This is what we are taught by the parable of the bad rich man and Lazarus. Luke xvi. The rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day. Lazarus was a poor beggar who lay at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; and no one gave him any thing. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. But lo! the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom; and the rich man died, and was buried in hell. We read of no other cause of his damnation than that of hard-heartedness to this poor man, and his superfluous extravagance in his own pleasures and vanity. He regarded not Lazarus as his younger brother, and suffered him to perish in his distress, whilst he looked upon his estate as his own right, a patrimony for which he was to give no account, and in which he might riot himself as he pleased; dogs, horses, servants, instruments of vanity and pleasure, made continual

demands upon him, and he had nothing for a brother, who was entitled to a subsistence through his hands.

6. But nothing renders this important truth more sensible or more dreadful than the sentence of the Great Judge at the last day. The wicked he will sentence to eternal flames, in punishment of their neglect of this precept. "For I was hungry," will he say, "and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me not in; naked, and you clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me." Matt. xxv. Are there then no other crimes, for which wicked men will be damned, save only this of uncharitableness to the poor, that the Judge mentions this alone? Or is this a crime more enormous than sacrileges, perjuries, blasphemy, or scandal, that they should find no place in this sentence? They certainly are crimes more enormous in themselves; yet this sentence obliges us to confess, that the neglect of alms is a most grievous sin, which suffices alone to damn souls, and which is a general sin of the wicked. The precept then must be extremely severe, and few satisfy their duty in complying sufficiently with it. "O!" cried out St. Gregory Nazianzen, (or. 16, de amore pauperum,) "that left hand affrights me, and those more than killing reproaches, which the wicked shall hear from the mouth of the Judge; not that they have unjustly seized the goods of others, nor that they have plundered the altars, or committed any other like crime; but that they have not relieved Christ in his poor." And St. Chrysostom (Hom. 6, in 2 Tim. t. 11, p. 695, ed. Ben.) says: "The virgins were not accused of fornication, or of adultery, or of envy; but that they had not oil, *i. e.* did not give alms. Likewise those who are damned and sentenced to everlasting fire, are accused of no other thing than that they have not fed Christ. Do you see that the sole omission of alms may damn souls? Do you fast every day? those virgins also fasted; yet this availed them not. Do you pray? prayer is fruitless without alms-deeds; without which all things become unclean, and the greater part in every virtue perishes."

7. That the precept of alms strictly obliges every one under the guilt of mortal sin, in the following circumstances, all divines agree. *First*, if another be in extreme want. That necessity we call extreme, in which a person is exposed to the danger of death, or of being grievously maimed, or the like; and that is called a grievous necessity, in which a person is in danger of suffering some very great detriment in his temporal estate; a common necessity is that which we ordinarily find in beggars. If we know any brother to be under extreme necessity, or to be in danger of perishing by hunger, cold, or the like, we are bound to relieve him, though we part with what is necessary for the support of our state or condition in the world. The reason is clear; because we are bound to prefer the life of our neighbour to our state or fortune in the world. Also because, when a person falls into extreme necessity, all things become common; the law of the inequality of fortunes or conditions ceases, and every man has a right of justice to a supply of his present extreme necessity from the property of others. In this case it is strictly true: "If you do not relieve, you kill." St. Ambrose, l. offic. relat. cap. 21. This is a case much more frequent than many imagine. Many perish for want in the streets, in their cottages, on the highways, by famine, by cold, by injuries, in their sick beds, &c. Pastors, magistrates, and other superiors are obliged to seek

out such objects, and carefully to watch against such dangers, especially in the cases of bashful poor, who are ashamed to make known publicly their necessitous circumstances, as is observed by St. Ambrose, offic. 1. c. 30, t. 4, p. 448; St. Aug. Serm. 3, in Ps. 103, t. 4, p. 1157; St. Chrysost. Hom. 21, in Rom. &c. This is to be understood, when the person has proved his necessity to be real and extreme; without which condition we are not too easily to believe the tales of strollers. Nor is any man bound to go about the world in quest of such necessitous objects; it suffices, if he relieve those he meets, and is careful to discover and assist the bashful poor, who fall in his way, as St. Thomas teaches; 2, 2æ, q. 71, a. 1.

8. If we meet another labouring under any grievous necessity, though not extreme, we are bound to succour him, by giving what we can subtract from our fortunes, without sinking our family or rank in the world; otherwise we cannot sincerely love either God or our neighbour; for to love our neighbour is to desire, and, as much as in us lies, to procure his good. "Let us not love in words and the tongue, but by deeds and in truth. He that possesses worldly wealth, and seeing his brother in want, shuts his bowels against him, how can the love of God be in him?" 1 John iii. And in the last sentence on the reprobate, Christ would not have mentioned in particular this precept, had not its mortal transgression been most frequent, and the omission of a duty most dear to him.

9. All persons who enjoy fortunes which are superfluous or unnecessary to themselves, are bound to bestow them on the poor, according to Bellarmine, Sylvius, and the most general opinion of divines. "Command the rich—to give freely." 1 Tim. vi. 17. "Let the person who has two coats, give one to him who has none, and let him that has food, do the like." Luke iii. 11. St. Jerom writes: "If you have more than you want for raiment and food, give it away, and consider yourself as discharging a debt." Ep. ad Hedibiam, qu. 1, p. 171, t. 4, ed. Ben. Most men indeed complain that they want for themselves, far from finding any thing superfluous or to spare; but if they carefully look into their own consciences, they will find that they are only the demands of luxury, of pride, of the love of delights, vanity, and extravagance, which they call wants. "What we think necessary is often superfluous. But if we seek superfluities, we shall never have enough. Brethren, ask what sufficeth for the work of God, not what will satisfy your avarice." St. Aug. in Ps. 147, n. 12, p. 1658, t. 4.

It is not indeed unlawful, and may be a part of virtue, and commendable, that a person not in opulence augment his fortune in the world for the support of his family, providing that neither ambition nor avarice has any share in his heart, and that in the mean time he give plentiful alms. But there is often great danger, lest covetousness cloak itself under a pretence of virtue or necessity, to make avarice, vanity, or sensuality pretences for not having superfluities: "it is a robbery, it is a sacrilege: what you thus lavish is ours." St. Bernard.

10. Those who have nothing which can be deemed superfluous to their state, or the necessary and simple support of their family and dignity in the world, are still bound to subtract something from themselves for the use of the poor. "If you abound in wealth, give away abundantly; if you have but little, still give cheerfully." Tobias iv. 9. "The man who shuts his ears to the entreaties of the poor, shall himself implore, and shall

not be heard." Prov. xxi. Let a man save from his necessary expenses only two farthings, with the widow in the gospel, and give them cheerfully; or let him, with the widow of Sarepta, a poor woman, an alien from the people of God, a barbarian, a mother of children, divide her little stock with Elias, *i. e.* with the poor, as St. Chrysostom elegantly exhorts, Hom. 19, in 2 Cor. t. 10, p. 576, ed. Ben. That father often exhorts, that if a man has nine children, he should still count God, *i. e.* his poor, for a tenth: for what would he do, if he had still a tenth child? He would maintain it. St. Austin says: "Have you children? Add one to the number. Give something to Christ;" in Ps. 38, t. 4, p. 313. "They lay up for their children, these hoard for their offspring, and they for theirs. Who thinks of Christ? Who provides for his soul? All goes to their children. Let them remember, that besides the children they have here, there is another in heaven. To him they owe all; let him at least have his share." Id. in Ps. 48, n. 14, p. 433. We must indeed know, that virtue requires the honest improving of our stock, of our thrift, and all opportunities of lawful gain and good husbandry, without uneasiness, eagerness, or the bent of passion. For this is the proper foundation of all liberality and alms, to make the best use of the just means of gaining, that so we may have the ability of expending upon convenient and necessary occasions, either of rewarding such persons as deserve well, or of relieving the necessitous. Liberality and frugality are but one virtue; for without frugality liberality is profuseness, and without liberality frugality is avarice. There is only this difference, that liberality is seen in giving, and frugality in saving; and both concur to make up the same virtue. A man is not to injure his family by lavish liberality, against that justice, which he owes to his own, but to retrench from superfluities in table, dress, or diversions, that he may reserve a portion for Christ in his poor. It is the advice of St. Chrysostom, that he lay by the tenth part of his gains or revenues for this purpose. For from dispensing a man from giving alms, it is the remark of St. Cyprian, (l. de op. et eleemosynis,) that a great number of children ought to oblige a man to give the larger; for the "sins of many are to be redeemed; the souls of many are to be saved." We must always remember, that "the superfluities of the rich are the necessaries of the poor; we keep what is not our own, if we retain what is superfluous." St. Aug. in Ps. 147. "He that possesses the wealth of this world, and seeing his brother in want, shuts his bowels against him, how can the love of God abide in him?" 1 John iii. 13. "Never forget the duties of benevolence and compassion; for by such sacrifices heaven is obtained." Heb. xiii. 16. What of those, who by exactions oppress the poor? "Was it not enough for you to enjoy plentiful pastures, without diminishing what was left!" Ezech. xxxiv. 18.

DISCOURSE XXI.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF ALMS-DEEDS.

1. THE incomparable spiritual advantages, annexed to the practice of alms-deeds, ought infinitely to recommend it to us, though it had not been

enjoined us by any precept. God being bounty itself, and infinite bounty, requires that we in our poverty imitate this attribute of his goodness to the best of our abilities. He therefore has established this rule in the distribution of his graces, that he will proportion his liberality towards us to that which we show to our fellow-creatures. "Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete, withal it shall be measured to you again." Luke vi. 38, &c. Now we see the condition, under which all the graces of God are offered to us; viz., if we are liberal to the poor in alms-deeds, if we imitate this divine virtue. Whatever therefore we do for our neighbours, we do incomparably more for ourselves; for we receive from God much more in return than we give to our brother. Should not we thank a person, and think we had great obligations to him, if he should offer to us his ground to till for our own profit to reap an hundred fold, which would suffice to enrich us for our whole lives? We are more obliged to our brother, when we are so happy as to do him any service; for in his field we reap as plentiful a crop as we please, and lay up stores for eternity. It is then most true, that he who gives alms, receives the greater benefit, and is incomparably the greater gainer.

2. By alms he moves God most readily to hear his prayer. "Break thy bread with the poor, and invite the indigent into thy house; when you see a naked person, clothe him, and despise not thy own flesh. Then shalt thou call upon God, and he shall hear thee; thou shalt cry out, and he shall say, Behold, I am here." Isa. lviii. "Hide thy alms in the bosom of the poor, and it shall obtain thy pardon." Eccles. xxix. 15. If we are deaf to the cries of the poor, we make Gods hut his ears to our cries. "He who shuts his ears to the cries of the poor, shall himself cry out, and shall not be heard." Prov. xxi. 13. "Injure not the widow and the orphan. If ye hurt them, they will call upon me, and I will hear them." Exod. xxii. 22. St. Chrysostom having taken notice, as he went to the church at Antioch, that many, who were able to relieve the poor, passed by them, while in great distress lining the streets, said in his sermon: "After such inhumanity, we dare lift up our hands to heaven to implore mercy, and the pardon of our sins; do not we rather fear, lest after our prayers thunder should fall upon us, and crush us? Do not we tremble lest that poor person, whose miseries we despised, should seem to appear to us in our sleep in the night, and reproach us for our cruelty, as I have heard several say they had seemed to suffer in dreams, through the remorse of such a crime. Though these were only dreams, and a transient suffering, do not we dread lest we may some time see that poor man in Abraham's bosom reproaching and condemning us?" Serm. 5, in Genes. ex. 8, t. 5, p. 649, ed. Ben. St. Peter Chrysologus writes, Serm. 2: "Man, give earthly substance to receive heaven; God requires you to be merciful to your fellow-creatures, and promises heaven." "Give, and it shall be given to you." Luke vi. 38. Give what? That, which rust consumes; which thieves, or a thousand accidents, may rob you of; what you cannot carry with you; what only feeds your passions. "And it shall be given to you." What? Grace, and an eternal crown.

3. Alms-deeds have a particular virtue to purge away sins, and to obtain of God the great gift of sincere repentance. When king Nabuchadnezzer was threatened by God with the most dreadful chastisements for

his pride and other crimes, the prophet Daniel gave him this advice: "May my advice not offend thee, O king, redeem thy sins by alms-deeds, and thy iniquities by relieving the poor." Dan. iv. 24. The hypocrisy, pride, scandal, and other crimes of the Pharisees had drawn from the mouth of our merciful Redeemer the most terrible denunciations of the divine vengeance; yet he tells them: "Give alms, and behold all is clean to you." Luke xi. This we may address to all sinners: you, who have wallowed in the filth of impure pleasures; you, who have defiled yourselves by beastly drunkenness; you, who have, by your usuries and extortions, oppressed the necessitous; you who have, by your pride and presumption, attacked heaven itself; redeem your crimes with alms, and behold all things are made clean to you. Join liberality to the poor with fervent prayer, to beg of God a sincere conversion of heart, and you will certainly be so happy as to obtain that infinite mercy; and accompany your tears of repentance with continual alms, and these, joined with true penitence of heart, will expiate your offences, and wash away the deepest stains of your soul. "Break thy bread with the hungry; then shall thy light break forth like the morning, and thy cure shall soon follow." Isa. lvii. "Thy cure, that is, the remission of all thy sins," says the gloss. "By good works the sinner is saved from everlasting perdition, as by these he is disposed to obtain the grace of repentance." St. Thomas, 2, 2æ. q. 143. a 2, ad. 5. Whence divines teach, that penitents and all sinners lie under a special obligation of giving larger alms. "The fiercest fire is extinguished by water, and alms-deeds resist sin." Eccles. iii. 33.

4. In this sense alms-deeds obtain mercy in the terrible day of judgment, and deliver the sinner from everlasting torments. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Mat. v. The angel Raphael said to Tobias: "Prayer is good with fasting, and abundantly better than treasures, because alms save from death, and remit sin, and lead to eternal life." Tob. xii. "Judgment without mercy to him who shows not mercy. But mercy surpasses judgment." James ii. "We shall appease God by our liberality to the poor. Give unto the poor, and thy Judge is softened." St. Chrys. Hom. de pœnit. Whence it is often said, that a man of great alms-deeds will never perish everlastingly; but this we must understand of alms given out of the motive of perfect charity. St. Austin writes of this virtue: "Mercy attends at the gates of hell, and suffers no merciful person to be thrown into it." Hom. 39, inter. 50. Thus the prayers and alms-deeds of Cornelius the centurion deserved, that God should send an angel to conduct him to the true faith, rather than he should perish. "Thy alms and thy prayers," said that ambassador from heaven to him, "have ascended and are recorded in heaven." Acts x. 4. When Tabitha, a holy widow, was dead at Joppa, all the widows surrounded St. Peter, showing him the garments she had made for them. Acts ix. 39. This moving sight, joined with the tears of so many whom she had relieved, moved St. Peter miraculously to restore her again to life by prayer. In like manner do deeds of mercy plead before the tribunal of Christ in favour of sinners; the poor relieved by them are advocates in their behalf, and move the Judge to show mercy to them, who were themselves lovers of mercy. This Christ teaches by the parable of the unjust steward. Luke xvi. But this is most especially true of those works of mercy, which tend to the advancement of religion and piety, and which promote the honour of God and the salvation of souls. The pious Jews used a most

powerful recommendation to our blessed Saviour in favour of the centurion, whose servant was sick, when they said: "And he has built us a synagogue." Luke vii. 5. Whilst our sins call for justice, these works of mercy will disarm it, and induce the Father of mercy to wait patiently, and to convert our souls to him. They will cover, at the last day, a multitude of iniquities, will give us confidence whilst the heavens tremble, and will make the countenance of the sovereign Judge lay aside its terrors, and display towards us all the charms of sweetness and tender mercy. "Happy is the man, who attends to the poor and indigent: in the evil day God shall deliver him." Ps. xl. 1. "The evil day to sinners is the day of judgment. However, you pass by the poor, and treat them worse than your dogs; they are plentifully fed, while the beggar perishes through want. But you reap some benefit, receive some services from friends and servants. What if I should convince you, that this poor person is of more service to you than all of them together. He will attend you at the judgment-seat, he will save you from fire, which your servants and the whole world cannot do. Who raised the dead Tabitha; servants or the poor?" St. Chrysostom, Hom. 11, in Heb. p. 116, t. 12. "Alms-deeds free from all sin, and deliver from death, and shall not suffer a soul to be lost. Those shall be inspired with confidence, in the presence of God, who gives alms," said Tobias to his son. Tob. iv. 11, 12.

5. Alms purchase heaven, and lay up there a great treasure, which will never fail. Consider the last sentence to the elect: "Possess the kingdom—for I was hungry, and you gave me to eat, &c." Mat. xxv. 35. Whence Christ, exhorting us to alms-deeds, says: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth; where rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Mat. vi. 19, 20. Hence, what we throw away on luxury and vanity, we properly give to the devil and to the world; what we lay out according to the rules of the gospel, simplicity and frugality, in making the necessary provision for our family, we give to justice; but what we spare from our necessities to bestow on the poor, is laid up for ourselves; this is a treasure sent before us, and deposited in heaven; it is a bank, which will repay us with interest to eternity. "Money given to the poor is lent to God." Prov. xix. 17. How solicitous are men to increase their fortunes, and to improve their stock? How do they embrace an opportunity of putting out a loan to great advantage? Here, we place it to produce an eternal and unspeakable interest, and for our security have the bond of a God that it shall never fail. We read in the "Spiritual Meadow," c. 201, that Synesius, the bishop of Cyrene, gave his bond to Evagrius a philosopher, who had lately embraced the Christian faith, that he should receive from God in the world to come, a hundred fold interest for three hundred pieces of gold, which he gave to the poor. The philosopher, on his death-bed, ordered the bond of the bishop to be put into the coffin, and buried with him. But appearing afterwards to the bishop he ordered him to open his grave, and take back his bond, together with an ample receipt; for he had received incomparably more. Tillemont in the Life of Synesius, t. 12. We have this assurance by faith: "Whoever gives a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple; yea, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Mat. x. 42.

6. Christ, to recommend this virtue in the strongest manner, declares,

that whatever we do to the poor for his sake, he accepts as done to himself. "He that harbours one of these little ones in my Name, harbours me." Mat. xviii. 5. And in the last sentence, he will tell the good, that they visited him sick and in prison, and fed and clothed him, adding: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." Mat. xxv. 40. And the wicked he will reproach, that they neglected to visit, feed, and clothe him, saying: "As long as you did it not to one of these least ones, neither did you do it to me." Mat. xxv. 45. It was a great comfort and happiness to the primitive faithful, to be able to harbour and entertain the apostles; by which charity they shared in the fruit of their labours, and of the conversion of the world. "He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of the prophet; and he that receives a just man, shall receive the reward of the just." Mat. x. 41. St. Paul congratulates Philemon, as for the greatest happiness and virtue, that "the bowels of the saints have rested by thee, brother." Philem. v. 7. But Christ enhances the value of the least action of charity exercised towards any neighbour, when he declares that it is done to himself. Happy do we esteem those holy persons, who served Christ in his state of mortality, received him under their roofs, ministered unto him with their own hands, and furnished him and the holy college of his disciples with food or raiment. "They ministered to him out of their stock." Luke viii. If a king would have the pleasure of receiving alms from a subject, he would be obliged to disguise himself; for who would presume to give him a morsel of bread whilst on his throne, and in the midst of his court? Thus Jesus, our divine head, becomes indigent in the necessity of his members, and weak in their weaknesses, that we may serve him in their persons. St. Martin, whilst a soldier, met in the middle of a severe winter, at the gates of Amiens, a poor man almost naked, begging alms of those that passed by; he saw no one give him any thing, or take notice of him; and he had nothing about him but the cloak which he wore; for he had already bestowed every thing else on other poor persons. He therefore drew his sword, and cut his cloak in the middle into two halves; with the one part he wrapped himself, the other he gave to the poor beggar. Some laughed at him in this awkward attire; others reproached themselves, that they, who had plenty, had given the poor man nothing. The night following in his sleep he saw Christ, who appeared clothed with the half of the garment, which he had bestowed on the poor man, and heard him say to a troop of angels which surrounded him: "Martin, still a catechumen, clothed me with this coat." After this vision he hastened to receive the holy sacrament of baptism, being eighteen years of age. Sulpitius Severus in vit. S. Martin, l. 1.

7. What motive could be more powerful to press the love of this virtue on us? "Let us not say that he is unworthy and undeserving, a wicked and base fellow. Though he be unworthy, he is a member of Christ, who receives a benefit conferred on him as if done to himself. This consideration furnishes us with four powerful motives. He is most worthy, who asks; for it is the Lord himself. The poor man for whom he asks, is pressed by urgent necessity; it is easy to bestow what he asks; he begs a little bread, not any thing to feed vanity or luxury. The recompence promised is exceeding great, even the kingdom of heaven. These are motives which might move a heart of stone, and excite a soul, though of

all others the most covetous, blind, savage, devoid of pity, and stupid. But I will add something still stronger. Let those initiated by baptism, and admitted to the divine mysteries hear me. Christ has not spared his own flesh, or his own blood; but has given them to nourish us. And you will not give a morsel of bread or a cup of drink for his sake. What pardon do you deserve? Moreover, what you refuse to give to Christ, to your great advantage, you perhaps, give to the devil, to your great detriment. If you hoard it up, either thieves, or other accidents, or at least death, robs you of it. Choose rather to lay it up in a treasury not exposed to robbers." St. Chrys. Hom. in illud, Vidua eligatur, p. 327, ed. Ben. t. 3.

8. Christ honoured the condition of the poor; was born, lived, and died in the most severe poverty; pronounces the poor blessed; and shall not we, for his sake, regard that condition with tenderness?

We are bound to love and assist the poor, even as men of the same flesh and blood, and descending from the same father. "We are all brethren." Tertull. The very sentiments of nature inspire us with compassion for their miseries. We are bound to do this far more as Christians. But we pretend that we have nothing to spare. Alas! what superfluities do other impartial eyes see in fine clothes, in lodgings, in dainty and multiplied dishes? The decency of rank requires not all this; the simplicity of the gospel condemns it. I say nothing of criminal expenses in excesses, in drinking, in balls, theatres, and the like. Even the Turks, the most rapacious of mortals, are obliged by their law to give very large alms, in which they are so punctual, that beggars are seldom seen among them. The laws oblige all to large sums for this purpose; as (*e.g.*) a merchant to give one part out of forty of his gains. They call alms in the Alcoran, *Elzecah*, *i. e.* justice, or acts of obligation and debts. The poor, when they beg, commonly say not, give me alms, but give me God's right, or what is due to God. *Haag Allah.* Jovet. Hist. des relig. t. 3, p. 110.

Alms must be accompanied with liberality, charity, justice, and prudence.

9. They are to be more diligently given in times of penance, prayer, and devotion, especially during the holy fast of Lent, as the fathers and the church in her office of that season demonstrate. On Sundays it was the custom in the primitive church for all to bring some alms, if possible. "Thou art rich, and dost thou think that thou keepest holy the sabbath-day, who never castest an eye on the poor's box?" says St. Cyprian, l. de opere et eleemosynis. St. Paul exhorts every one to lay up something for the poor on every first day of the week or Sunday. "On the first day of the week, let every one of you put apart with himself, laying up what it shall please him." 1 Cor. xvi. 2. The apostle directs this to be done by every one at home. Shortly after this, contribution of alms was made in the church every Sunday. St. Justin, Apol. 1, mentions, that every one, that was willing, gave something to the treasury for the poor, according to his own discretion. Tertullian speaks of the same, adding: "No one is compelled, but every one gives what he pleases. These are the deposits of piety. They are employed in feeding the poor, the orphans, abandoned aged persons, those who have suffered by shipwrecks, who are sentenced to the mines, are in banishment or in prisons." Apolog. c. 39, p. 31, ed. Rig. Theodoret says, that the quantity was left to every one's discretion, as the apostle mentions; yet teaching that God gives his blessing to those who choose the best sacrifices, and offer them

most cheerfully. 1 Cor. 16. St. Chrysost. Hom. 43, in 1 Cor. t. 10, n. 401, 402, ed. Ben., says: "St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to this by the example of all the churches; also for the sake of the day; for the Lord's day calls for our charity. He says not absolutely; let this or that person, but let every one, rich or poor, servant or master, lay up something. Some will say: be not troublesome; leave it to the choice of every one to do as he pleases. You make us blush. But the apostle was not ashamed always to mention this duty; nor did he fear being troublesome by taking upon him to speak for the beggars, and in their place. If I said: Give it me; perhaps I should blush. But now I only intreat for the poor; nay, not so much for the poor, as for your sake who give the alms; therefore I speak boldly. What shame is it to say: Give something to the Lord, who is hungry; clothe him, who wanders naked; harbour the harbourless? He, who can want nothing for his own person, will say before the whole world at the last day: 'I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat.' And shall I be ashamed to speak of it? God forbid. Such a shame would be a snare of the devil. I will therefore speak, and will cry out with a louder voice than the poor themselves: Give to the necessitous." In the primitive ages every church had always a collected depositum, which was very considerable. That of Rome under Pope Cornelius, A.D. 250, maintained one hundred and fifty-four clergy, and one thousand poor, out of the treasury raised by voluntary contributions. Euseb. hist. l. 4. c. 23. But they excluded from this benefit those who were able to work, because they could even assist others. Const. Apost. l. 2, c. 4. The civil laws ordered any such person, if a free man, to till the land for the public, which if he did not do, any one might make him his slave that pleased. L. 7. Cod. de mendicantibus validis, l. 11.

10. The conditions which must necessarily accompany our alms, are, that they be given readily and cheerfully; with prudence and care, according to the order of charity; with justice; without ostentation; for God, and out of a motive of tender compassion and charity. First, readily: "Say not to thy friend, come to-morrow and I will give thee something, if thou canst now spare it." Prov. iii. 28. "If I refused what the poor asked, and turned away from the widow." Job. xxx. The heathens observed this: "You give twice, if you give readily." P. Syrus. "If you had given the six sesterces when I asked you, Pætus, I should have given you credit for two hundred; but as you have thought proper to make me wait for them, shall I tell you the real truth? Pætus, you are a loser of six sesterces."* Martial, l. 6, epigr. 30. Benevolence is always ready, and produces her gifts soon. "He must be unwilling to give who parts with his money tardily." Seneca de beneficiis, p. 5.

From the example of Abraham, when he entertained three angels, thinking them strangers, "learn how ready you ought to be to entertain your guests." St. Ambrose, l. de Abrah. c. 5. The old man runs; he flies. He has met with the game he sought. He did not call for his servant, as if he should say: I have found a treasure, and I must secure so great an advantage. "Consider Abraham's liberality; he killed a calf,

* Sex sestertia, si statim dedisses,
Deberem tibi, Pæte, pro ducentis:
At nunc cum dederis diu moratus,
Vis dicam tibi veriora veris?
Sex sestertia, Pæte, perdidisti.

he made his cake. Consider his cheerfulness; he did all this himself with the help of his wife." St. Chrysostom, Hom. 41, in Gen. The cheerful manner of giving, enhances doubly the gift; whereas, if it be joined with reproaches or contempt, this is often a greater affliction than the alms is a comfort. "He that despises the poor, reproaches God." Prov. xv. 5. "Whenever you give any thing, do it with a cheerful countenance." Eccl. xxxv. "Each one as he has settled it in his own mind; not from sadness or necessity; for God loves the cheerful giver." 1 Cor. xvi. "If you give a piece of bread without cheerfulness, you lose the bread and the merit of the alms." St. Aug. in Ps. 42. By this disposition of the heart, the widow, with her two mites, "gave more than them all." Mark xii. 43.

11. Prudence must accompany every virtue, or it degenerates into vice. But this is no where more necessary than in alms-deeds. Great discretion is requisite, that the order of charity and the greater indigence be attended to. "Let them be particularly careful, not to refuse every thing to such as have a right to something; not to give much where little is due; nor to part with little to those who stand in need of much; not to lavish in a hurry, not to distress by delay, not to expect a temporary reward for their charity. Let not a surly countenance spoil the present. Let them not, after they have complied with all these conditions, value themselves on what they have done." St. Greg. M. Pastor. cur. par. 3. c. 20, p. 54, ed. Ben. Lazy beggars, who refuse to work, are usually unworthy to be much succoured; and both the civil and canon law forbid it. "He that will not work deserves not to eat." 2 Thess. iii. 10. A person is bound by the order of charity, first, to assist poor relations; secondly, those who are virtuous; those who are linked with him more strictly with Christ; and whose necessities are greatest: lastly, all in need, but chiefly his own family in faith; 1 Gal vi. 10; even enemies. "Do good to those who hate you." Mat. v. "If your enemy is hungry, feed him." Rom. xii. 20. Even the wicked; for we consider them still as men: St. Aug. in Ps. 102, St. Ambros l. 1, offic. c. 29. "Turn not aside from that poor person." Tob. iv. 7. "Give to all that apply to you." Luke vi. 30. Though discretion is requisite, lest impostors rob the more necessitous, yet the fathers frequently admonish us, that the poor are not to be too severely suspected or examined; because such a disposition would certainly exclude many who ought to be relieved. So St. Ambrose, offic. l. 2, c. 16; St. Augustin, serm. 41. "You are sure to censure the beggar. Why does not this fellow work? Is he to be maintained in idleness? He is a cheat and an impostor. But does he deserve so harsh a sentence, because he asks you for a bit of bread or an old coat? Yes, he will go and sell it. And pray how do you manage your own affairs? Condemn rather yourself. Can you possibly believe that all the beggars you meet are lazy vagrants? Be less severe in your judgments, and remember the obligation of mercy and compassion." St. Chrys. Hom. 11 in Heb. "Do not be too strict in your inquiries; receive Christ for Christ's sake. If you are too nice in your inquiries, you will pass by many real objects. If this be not one, it is not your fault, and you will not lose the reward. But he who scrutinizes too scrupulously, shall be punished. Should he be a murderer or a thief? Thy God makes the sun rise upon him, whom thou judgest to be unworthy of his daily food. He is a disciple of him who healed the person that insulted him, who embraced

Judas that betrayed him." St. Chrysost. Hom. 21, in Rom. t. 19, p. 677, ed. Ben.

12. Alms must in the first place be always accompanied with justice. "He who defrauds the poor to offer sacrifice, is no better than he who slaughters the son before his father." Eccl. xxxiv. 24. "Hating rapine in a holocaust." Isa. lxi. 8. "The offerings of the wicked are abominable, because they are earnings of guilt." Prov. xxi. 27; Mal. ii. 13.

All ostentation is to be carefully shunned, and secrecy sought. "Send not the trumpeter before you." "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand does." Matth. vi.

Our alms must be liberal and plentiful. "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth in blessings, shall reap blessings." 2 Cor. ix. "Spare something, allow something out of your yearly income or your daily gains. Will a tenth part suit you? Well, give a tenth part. It is little, to be sure. The Pharisee, whom you are bound to surpass in virtue, gave a tenth. But I fear you do not give a thousandth part. Instead of surpassing the Pharisee, you do not equal him." St. Aug. in Ps. 146. "The widow that gave but two farthings, sowed as much as Zachæus: she gave less, it is true, but her will supplied the rest." Id. in Ps. 125, 3. But you say you have nothing superfluous. Let Christian moderation be your rule, and you will find that in your table, servants, stables, house, dress, children, &c. three-tenths are saved. Give to the poor more freely, their wants being greater.

Remember the necessities of your family at home, so as not to forget your family abroad committed to you by God himself If you have a sick or poor wife within doors, serve her, employ your charity there. If you can spare but a little for other poor, endeavour to do that with a great desire. As to your children: "If you really love your children, if you bestow upon them all the offices of charity, you ought to be particularly careful to recommend them to God by the practice of virtue. Be such a father to your children as Tobias was to his." St. Cypr. l. de op. et eleem. "You are afraid that large donations should reduce your income, and while you indulge your fears, life passes away. You are solicitous not to impair your fortune, and in the mean time your health and life are impaired; to improve your estate, you lose your soul." Ibid. "Make yourselves friends with the fruits of iniquity." Luke xvi. 9. "Eat your bread with the hungry and the poor, and clothe the naked with your raiment." Tob. iv. 17. "I was an eye to the blind, a foot to the lame. I was the father of the poor." Job xxix. 15, 16. "I wept over my afflicted neighbour." Job xxx. 25. "I refused not to assist the poor; I attended to the petition of the widow; I allowed the orphan who grew up with me a share of my food; because from my childhood and from my mother's womb I was mindful of mercy." Job xxxi. 16, 17, 18. How does St. Paul press upon Christians the duty of alms, being urged and straitened himself by the love of Jesus Christ? 2 Cor. viii. 2. As nothing is more hateful to men than sordid avarice, so nothing gains their affections and good will so much as charity and a prudent liberality, especially in persons of rank. Munificence is the proper attribute of princes. The joy of a good conscience, and of a generous relieving of the indigent, is a present advantage. "He is a valuable man, who compassionates and assists." Ps. iii. 5. "He scattereth and gave to the poor." v. 9. God usually makes alms the seed of the temporal increase of our fortunes. He exacts this tribute, and he

recompenses it with giving his benediction to multiply our stock and family. If he send us trials, we must not lose our confidence in him; but trust in his mercy, and rejoice in his will. See examples in the lives of Job, Tobias, St. John the Alms-giver, &c. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and give him of the first of all thy fruits; and thy barns shall be filled with abundance, and thy wine-presses shall run over." Prov. iii. 9, 10.

DISCOURSE XXII.

ON SCANDAL.

1. THE sin of scandal is defined by St. Thomas, a word or action, bearing at least an appearance of evil, which gives to another an occasion of spiritual prejudice or ruin. It is a grievous crime against that charity, which we owe both to God and to our neighbour; often against justice, and many other precepts and virtues.

A zeal for the honour God is the first property of divine love; for every one that loves God, desires in the first place, and above all things, that he be honoured and glorified by all his creatures. This is the earnest desire of his heart; this is the first object of his prayers and endeavours. This we express in the first petition of our Lord's prayer: "Hallowed be thy Name." This made the royal prophet and all the saints exhort all men to praise God with him: "Magnify the Lord with me." This holy zeal moved the faithful servants of God to run over sea and land, to fear no dangers, to regard no torments or death; to look upon fatigues and labours as the greatest pleasure, that they might make God known and loved by such creatures as are capable of paying him that tribute. A soldier is zealous to defend and augment the honour of his prince, and a child that of his father; and can a Christian be indifferent to the honour of God, and yet pretend that he loves him?

One who labours to convert souls to God, is called "a man of God." Is it possible that any creature, much more a Christian, can be wanting in this duty, to which so many motives most powerfully excite him? Nay, we may cry out, is it possible that any Christian should act the part of the devil, espouse his cause, and execute his designs against God? Yes: this is what every scandalous sinner doth. He makes himself the apostle of the devil, the minister and agent of the devil; "the man or agent of the devil."

2. Christ the Son of God was made man, laboured, suffered, and died only to save souls, and to destroy sin. "Christ has appeared, that he might take away our sins." 1 John iii. 5. "The Son of man came to seek and to save what had perished." Luke xix. 10. "For us men and for our salvation." But he, who is guilty of scandal, studies to ruin and destroy the fruit and the whole mystery of the incarnation, and of man's redemption. He joins the devil in endeavouring to ruin souls, for which Christ died: and in propagating sin, which he came to take away. The devil bends all his malice to this; he uses all his art to frustrate the effects of the adorable blood of Christ. Jesus Christ was incarnate, and travelled

about to convert souls; so would the devil desire to become incarnate, and to go from province to province, to draw men into his party, and to make himself known and adored. But what he cannot do himself, this he does by the scandalous sinner, and much more effectually. For men would be upon their guard against his open attempts, who are easily inveigled and overcome by the persuasions and example of men, by whom he tempts in a much more dangerous manner than in his own shape he is able to do. Yes! by your naked necks; your immodest glances; by your envenomed eyes is he as it were become incarnate to induce others to sin. By your slanderous or blasphemous tongue; by your sacrilegious mouth and rash oaths; by your detractions does he preach sin, and extend its empire on earth. You make yourself his instrument; his apostle; an antichrist. "And how many are become antichrists?" 1 John ii. 18.

3. The same sin of scandal is the most capital injury that can be offered to our neighbour. Corporal murder is the greatest temporal injury we can do him; but the sin of scandal is the spiritual murder of his soul; a crime as much more grievous than the murder of the body, as the soul is of greater dignity and value, and as eternity surpasses time; especially if it cause not only sin, but the second death of the soul, which is eternal damnation. Every Christian ought with all holy apostolic men to weep, pray, and labour to draw souls out of the snares of the devil; and to prevent their fall into the pit of eternal damnation. But scandal wounds, murders, and destroys these immortal souls; souls for which Christ died. "Thy brother will be lost, for whom Christ died." 1 Cor. vii.

4. This sin of scandal, moreover, generally carries along with it an injustice. As it is a crime of injustice to rob another of his estate or to take away his life, so is it to rob his soul of spiritual life, or to plunge it into eternal damnation. From this circumstance especially arises the extreme difficulty of doing penance for the sin of scandal. He who has been guilty of it, is bound to repair the injury as much as in his power lies; and this how much soever it may cost him. He is bound to instruct, to admonish, to employ others for the same purpose, to pray, to use all endeavours possible to draw those sinners, whom he has seduced, out of their precipice. And how shall he be able to know, whether he have acquitted himself sufficiently of this obligation, and satisfied this duty? When Marcion, or, as others say, his master Cerdo, the heresiarch, was converted, this condition was required of him, that he should bring back into the fold of the church all those souls which he had seduced; which condition, whilst he was endeavouring to accomplish, he died, says Tertullian. Berengarius the heresiarch had repented of his errors and sin; yet he died in the greatest terror on account of the souls which he had perverted, and had not been able to reclaim, saying: "This day my Lord Jesus Christ will appear to me, either to reward me, as I hope for my pains; or to condemn me, as I fear, for seducing others, whom I was not able to reclaim."

5. But perhaps, a soul or many souls are already lost through your sin. Alas! what will you do? They call for vengeance against you, the author of their damnation: "Avenge our blood, O God." Their blood calls out louder against you than that of Abel did against Cain; and this not from the earth, but now from the very bottom of hell. How will you retrieve or repair this loss? Had you stolen your neighbour's horse, or killed his ox, you might be able to restore him another. Had you burned

his house, you might have built him a new one, or at least have made him some kind of amends. But what will you give him, or what will you do for the loss of his immortal soul? What amends there will you make him?

The blood of Christ also demands vengeance upon you: it was spilt for that unhappy soul, but through you was spilt in vain. "Shall thy brother perish, for whom Christ died? Who will restore his innocent blood? Who will restore to him the price of our redemption?" St. Bern. You may pray, you may weep, you may fast, and give large alms. But all your tears, all your prayers, alms-deeds, or penance will never avail that unhappy soul, which you have pushed headlong into that abyss of never-ending torments, in which there is no more room for mercy. Should you do penance yourself for your own sin, still the soul of your brother is irretrievably lost.

6. Are you then surprised, that God should so severely chastise this sin? When God pardoned David his sin, he would not let the scandal of his bad example go without some remarkable punishment, at least in this life. "However, because thou hast caused the enemies of the land to blaspheme, thy son shall die." 2 Reg. xii. 14. Nor would God desist from that chastisement, though David fasted, prayed, and wept most bitterly to avert it; v. 16. When Ophni and Phineas, by their scandals, withdrew the people from offering sacrifices, the scriptures say: "Their sin was very great, because they hindered men from sacrificing to the Lord." 1 Reg. ii. 17. For, as the Holy Ghost adds: "If man offend man, God may be appeased; but if he offend the Lord, who will pray for him?" v. 25. Wherefore God denounces against them this terrible threat: "Behold, I will do in Israel what shall make the ears of all who hear it to tingle." 1 Reg. iii. 11. A threat which he executed with the most inflexible rigour upon them and their whole family. But Christ has chiefly expressed his indignation against the authors of so grievous an evil. He, with infinite love, took upon him the office of our Saviour and Redeemer, and to deliver our souls from sin and hell, paid our ransom with the price of his own precious blood; yet, after all he had done and suffered for his little ones, he foresaw the most dreadful havoc which scandal would make among them, how many precious souls it would destroy, and thereby frustrate all the designs of his infinite mercy in their favour, and all the effects of his sufferings for them; he loved them with an infinite love; they were most dear and precious to him; yet he foresaw that they would be torn from him, and would perish eternally through this monstrous evil. Therefore he cried out: "Wo be to the world from scandal!" It is indeed necessary, considering the malice of wicked men, that scandals should come; "it is necessary that scandals should happen;" but wo to him, who by his impiety will be the author of scandal! "But wo be to that man who gives scandal!" Mat. xviii. 7. "He who shall scandalize one of these little ones who believe in me, had better have a mill-stone hung about his neck," &c. v. 6. The name of Jeroboam, almost whenever it occurs, is branded with this mark of his sin: "Who sinned and caused Israel to sin." 3 & 4 Reg.

7. Truly wo to this sin of scandal! It is a monster among sins; it is a murder of immortal souls; a sin of devils, like them laying snares to destroy immortal souls. "The devil was a murderer from the beginning." John viii. It is a sin against that charity, which we owe to God, and the

love we are bound to have for our neighbour; a sin against the redemption of Christ, being directly contrary to the end of his incarnation and passion; a sin against the Holy Ghost, who hath done so much, wrought so many miracles, performed so many wonderful mysteries, conferred so many graces to sanctify these very souls; a sin, of which the most rigorous account must be given at the bar of divine justice, where it will be treated with the utmost severity. That soul is indeed lost; but "I will demand his blood at thy hands." Ezech. iii. Had you murdered the son of your friend and king, how would you dare to appear again in his presence? And how will you stand before the sovereign Judge at the last day, stained all over with the blood of his dear little ones? Ah! his adorable injured blood will loudly demand vengeance against you. The souls, which are lost by it, will, amidst their flames in everlasting death, never cease to cry out for justice upon you their murderer, and the cause of their perdition. The good angels who were deputed their guardians, as Christ assures us, will resent and revenge the injuries done to their pupils or wards. "I say unto you, that their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven." Mat. xviii. The angels are our protectors; but moved to just indignation at seeing the souls, which to them were most dear, and were committed by God to their trust, fall into sin, and perish through our scandals, they become our most zealous accusers, and desire to see the loss of their dear ones, of which we have robbed God, avenged and punished as such a crime deserves. One would imagine, that a sin so enormous, so fatal, and so dreadful in its effects, both in him who commits it, and in others who are destroyed by it, would find no place at least among Christians. Yet it is a sin at the same time the most common; it is committed daily and in all places. It is a crime, into which men easily fall, when they think not of it; though not excusable, because they ought to see it. Nay, who can say that he is free from the danger of having often offended by it? We easily, by tepidity, example, omissions, light words or actions, give to others an occasion of their spiritual ruin. "Who knows his transgressions?" Ps. xviii. Who does not tremble for himself? "Cleanse me from my hidden sins, and pardon thy servant the sins of others." Ib.

8. The sin of scandal destroys more souls than all the endeavours of apostolic labourers, and all the means of salvation instituted by God to reclaim; nay, more than are saved by the adorable blood of Christ. The universal inundation of sin, under which almost the whole world lies desolate, is chiefly owing to the ravages of scandal. If all men led virtuous lives, this universal example of good would have so strong an influence over the minds of all persons, that the reign of virtue would be propagated to our latest posterity, and its maxims would take deep root in the tender hearts of youth. But the baneful example of tepidity and sin lays the whole world waste; and it is on no other account that the world is declared the enemy of Christ, and that the practice of virtue is a perpetual warning against its maxims, spirit, and the torrent of its vices. And happy should we be, if we were faithful to our obligations to God, and did not ourselves take part sometimes with the devil or the world, in their war against Christ, by involving ourselves in the guilt of scandal. To be able to examine our own conduct on this head, it is necessary to take a view of this vice, and consider in what it consists, and in how many ways it is committed.

9. It is called scandal, which word in Greek signifies a stumbling-block or stone laid in the way, against which we strike our feet and fall. It is often taken in this literal sense in the holy scriptures. But in the spiritual sense it means a stumbling-block or occasion of a fall to the soul; or it is a word or action bearing an appearance, at least, of evil, which presents an occasion of another's spiritual ruin. It is called a word or action; because a mere thought or desire, which is not exteriorly manifested, cannot be a scandal; but an omission of a duty is sufficient, and is here to be understood under the word, action. Thus to omit hearing mass on a Sunday may give scandal no less than a positive criminal action. There is added: "Bearing at least an appearance of evil;" for it is not necessary to scandal that the action should be of its own nature criminal; if it bear an appearance of evil, this may often suffice; as in the case of Eleazar, in the book of Maccabees, had he eaten clean meats, which the people had thought to have been swine's flesh forbidden by the law. The definition says: "giving an occasion;" to express that the action committed must have a tendency towards such an evil influence; for if an occasion of scandal be taken, where none is given, it is "scandal taken not given;"* and the sin of scandal is not committed by such an action. It is said, "an occasion;" because it is not the cause of another's sin; he who sins is the cause of his own fall; but the scandal gave the occasion to it; and this occasion is equally given, and the sin of scandal is truly committed, though the ruin of another do not really follow. By the last words, "of a spiritual ruin," we are to understand not only the fall of another's soul into sin, but an omission of any virtue: for he is guilty of a mortal sin of scandal, who withdraws another from the act of any virtue.

10. We often call the offence that is taken, or the sin which is committed by another person, a "passive scandal;" as when we say, such a one was scandalized at another. This is sometimes taken with just cause; as when scandal had been really given. Or it is taken without just cause, out of weakness; which is called the scandal of the weak, as when the Jewish converts took scandal at those, who eat unclean meats; or it is taken out of mere malice, and this is called a "pharisaical scandal," because the Pharisees behaved so towards Christ. For Christ himself was to the wicked "a stumbling stone, and a stone of scandal." Isa. viii. This scandal is to be despised; nor must we omit the practice of virtue on account of the murmur, envy, or anger of the wicked. So Christ said of the Pharisees: "Suffer ye them." Matt. xv. Passive scandal, except that of malice, is not a distinct sin from that which is committed; nor is passive scandal properly called scandal, but rather the effect of scandal.

11. It is only active scandal, to which this definition belongs, and of which we speak, when we mention the sin of scandal. Now, this scandal is either direct, viz., when a person endeavours to persuade another to sin; or indirect and interpretative, when a person does not positively and directly solicit another to sin, nor intends it; yet does what tends to be an occasion of another's sin. Such a person besides his own actual sin, contracts by the same action the malice of a distinct sin against charity, viz., of the sin of scandal, as St. Thomas proves, 2, 2æ, q. 43, a. 3; and as appears from Christ, Mat. xviii.: "He that shall scandalize," &c.; and

* Scandalum acceptum, non datum.

from St. Paul, 1 Cor. viii: "Thy brother shall perish in thy knowledge;" who both speak evidently of indirect scandal. And the malice of an action is always imputed to sin, and sufficiently voluntary although it operate indirectly.

Hence, it follows that whoever first solicited another to sin, or suggested the thought of any sin to his accomplices, or who persuaded or encouraged them, is bound to confess this sin of scandal, with all its aggravating circumstances, as if he had seduced, suborned, or compelled them; also how many persons he thus solicited, and what farther damages, or evils naturally flowed from the sins of those others, to which he had given occasion. This is also to be done generally as to public sins committed before others. Thus a person must confess, as nearly as he can guess, before how many persons he has detracted, sworn, spoke lewdly, or committed any other sin; often also the quality of those persons; as if they were his own children, pupils, apprentices, or the like, whom he is bound in a particular manner to instruct, edify, &c.

Hence also we must infer, that it is not lawful to sell bad books, except that they may be confuted; or to sell any other thing to those who openly design to make a bad use of it; to give drink to others visibly to a great excess, as is often done at tables or in taverns, &c. Where indeed the necessity is most cogent, and the concurrence is not such but that the evil would otherwise equally be committed, many divines excuse it from guilt; as in the case of Christian slaves, who row the gallies of Mahometan pirates by grievous compulsion, and to avoid torments and death; which nevertheless could not be allowed, if on their refusing that work, the infidels could not fight, or would not be superior to the Christians.

12. The most general and frequent manner of committing the sin of scandal is that of evil example. The whole world is almost generally formed and modelled by example. All men, but especially youth, learn and imitate insensibly what they see. Indeed such is the frame of man that the soul receives impressions easily through the senses, and is as it were moulded by them. Through the corruption of our nature this effect is most powerful and strong from objects which flatter the passions and concupiscence. Hence arises the great influence of bad example. Every one, therefore, who sins by word or action before others is ordinarily guilty of scandal. I say ordinarily; for if a person should blaspheme before very holy persons, there could be no danger of scandal, as his action could excite in them only horror and indignation. But ordinarily all sin, whether passion, swearing, &c. when committed before others, is attended with the malice of scandal. Example teaches and preaches vice, and breaks down all the fences which are set to guard virtue. The great natural ramparts of innocence are the ignorance and shame of sin. Now both these are broken down by evil example. How happy are those tender souls that have never known any more of malice than its name; and that only to abhor and flee it? How amiable, how secure, how perfect is such an innocence? How beautiful is the short eulogium of St. Editha in the Roman martyrology couched in this single line: "Who being consecrated to God from her tender years, was rather unacquainted with the world than left it." How many young persons lived in holy innocence, till they learned evil by reading comedies or romances, or by hearing lewd or impious discourses, or by seeing bad example? For sin is learned by being seen. But the scandalous sinner is not content with making vice known

he moreover labours to make it general, and to perpetuate it to all succeeding ages, by rendering it familiar, and breaking down the shame and horror which men have of vice, till at length, it appears honourable, and a subject of boasting and of glory. "We easily accustom ourselves to what we often hear. Even murder itself appears a crime only when committed singly." St. Cyp. l. de. Spectac. ep. 22. "In the company of the wicked the innocent man is the only offender. It is reckoned a crime not to imitate their example. Fashion sanctions their transgressions, and their number silences the law." Ibid. Through the dissolute lives of Christians are the maxims of the gospel forgotten and trampled upon, and our holy religion blasphemed. "Christ is insulted in us." Salvian.

13. To such a height is impiety, irreligion, and bare-faced atheism now-a-days carried among us, that it is made a fashionable point of wit to turn into ridicule the most sacred mysteries of faith. And these low sarcasms, though grounded in excessive ignorance and impiety, affect the minds of weak men. So enormous and shocking is this scandal, that it is impossible to find a name to express it. "What they do not know they blaspheme." 2 Pet. ii. 12. Of all scandals next to this here mentioned against faith, that is the worst which laughs at virtue. Wicked men make the virtuous the objects of their satire, only because their example is a censure of their own impiety. "The righteous man is despised by him who walks in the path of iniquity." Prov. xxiv. 2. We are less astonished at the heathens, who insulted Christ, whom they did not know; but here is a Christian, who derides those that walk in the narrow paths of Christ. He who bears this holy Name, laughs at the wisdom of him whom he pretends to follow. What makes the condition of the authors of this kind of scandal worse, is, that they often excuse it to themselves; because, if they dissuade others from the evangelical counsels, or from heroic or eminent practices of virtue, they say that such omissions are not in their own nature sins. But are they not at least a great spiritual prejudice? Would it be no injustice to rob a man, upon pretence that this loss will not starve him to death? The two sons of Heli, when they withdrew men from voluntary sacrifices, might allege the same. Yet the Holy Ghost calls their sin an exceeding great crime; and God inflicted on them a punishment which no one could hear without being struck with horror. Yet this is the sin of those who call others scrupulous that condemn immodesty in dress, or do not go to balls and theatres; or who call those bigots that frequent assiduously sermons and public prayer, &c. Ah! shall we heed these revilers at religion? Certainly no more than we should a fool that laughed at wisdom. The horseman, when the dogs bark at him, does not even stop to beat them back, but pursues his journey; by which means they soon cease disturbing him; so ought we to behave towards such enemies of religion.

14. If scandal be in all ranks most grievous and pernicious, it is more especially so in persons whom God has raised above the level of the world. "The deformity of vice becomes more hideous in proportion to the rank and consequence of him who offends."* Juven. Sat. 8, v. 140. St. Fulgentius, writing to a Roman senator, put him in mind, that by his elevation in the world he must either do much good or a great deal of

* Omne animi vitium tanto conspectius in se
Crimen habet, quanto major, qui peccat, habetur.

harm; so great is the influence of example in a high station. This reproach in the first place belongs to the priest. "And now, O ye priests, this command is addressed to you." Mal. ii. As their lips are the depositories of sacred science, so ought their lives to be the uniform rule of perfect virtue. "But you have quitted the line of rectitude, and have scandalized many of my people. I will therefore render you low and contemptible in the opinion of mankind." Ibid. Parents and masters of families come in for their share next, as to the care they ought to have of those under them. It is an obligation of every Christian, "to make himself agreeable to his neighbour by virtue and edification." Rom. xv. "Simple and inoffensive." Phil. i. "Let your light shine," &c. Mat. v.

The obligation of restitution, and of repairing the damage ensuing from scandal, renders this sin the more dangerous. "Let them tremble and be cautious how they imitate the malice of the devil, by seducing others to their utter ruin, especially the young and thoughtless. I do not see how they can sufficiently repent. They should have thought it quite enough to damn their own souls." Gerson, Serm. de pœnit. The same learned and pious author observes, Compend. theol. c. 18, t. 1, p. 441, that those who have been the occasion of another's sin, seldom or never do secure penance, "because they cannot correct those whom they have seduced. Perhaps, these are now suffering in hell flames, calling down the vengeance of heaven, and praying for their eternal damnation." He therefore most vehemently exhorts to avoid all danger of scandal.

Let us then say with the apostle: "If by eating I scandalize my brother, I will abstain from food for ever." He would abstain from innocent things and his own right; how much more must we shun those that are evil? "Let us cultivate peace and give edification to one another." Rom. xiv. 19. Anciently, how did the holy lives of the professors of our divine religion exalt its honour and dignity? But now by so many hypocrites, libertines, tepid and dissolute livers, even in its very bosom, is scandal spread. "Is this the flourishing city?" Jerm. Lament. cap. ii. That church so flourishing, so admirable, so holy? "Your children are ruined,—the enemy has seized every thing, and the city is reduced to the last extremity,—she is beheld with contempt, and her holy festivals are treated with mockery. But be comforted, be comforted." Isa. iv. Holy Mother, comfort yourself in your affliction. God will always preserve you many holy members separated from the crowds and multitudes of the wicked. But let every one take care to shun the contagion of the scandalous. "I have hated the congregation of the profane, and I will not tarry with the wicked." Ps. xxv.

DISCOURSE XXIII.

ON BAD COMPANY.

1. To shun the dreadful danger and destroying influence of scandal, it is a precept of the utmost necessity, obligation, and importance, that we avoid bad company. Who can see without floods of tears, what heart can consider, without bursting with grief, the horrible spiritual evils and desolation, with which the example of the wicked fills the earth? the extinction

of virtue, and the universal inundation of sin which it causes! or the eternal damnation of millions and millions of precious souls, created to enjoy God for ever, and redeemed by the blood of Christ, which it never ceases to occasion! or the disorders, which in every part of the earth, in every nation, in every city, almost in every private house, it daily is the cause of! The providence of God, every where just, every where most holy and full of mercy and goodness, suffers the wicked to live for great and good purposes. He who permits the devil to assail men for the trial of their virtue, suffers the example of sinners in the world. First, that the sinners themselves may have time to repent, and to show that he desires not their death, but their conversion and salvation. Secondly, that the just may have in them an exercise of their patience, a test of their virtue, and an occasion of multiplying their triumphs and crowns. If there were no tyrants on earth, God would never have been glorified by the triumphs of his martyrs: and if no men were impious or unjust, where would be the merit or any proof of our meekness, patience, humility, and many other virtues? God therefore permits the bad every where to live intermixed with the good. In the bosom of his church, in the most sacred sanctuaries of virtue, he suffers the enemy to come in the night, while his pastors sleep, and sow tares amidst the good corn; both which must grow up together till the day come, in which both are to be cut down, when the corn will be gathered into the barn, and the tares thrown into the fire to burn. Whence he likens his church on earth to a barn floor on which the wheat lies mingled with the chaff, nay, buried and almost hidden under the great heaps of chaff, till the day of winnowing shall come. This situation of the world lays all men under the strictest obligation of studying what their comportment ought to be with regard to the wicked. To explain which we will consider, first, what our obligation is of shunning the company or familiarity of the wicked; and secondly, what our behaviour ought to be in the necessary commerce which we are obliged to have in this life with the wicked.

2. All men are strictly bound, as they tender their duty to God, and their eternal salvation, to shun the company of the wicked. First, because it is infinitely pernicious to their own souls, and an immediate occasion of their sin and damnation. Secondly, because it is scandalous to our neighbours. Thirdly, because it is highly injurious to God, and an express violation of his most holy and inviolable laws. There is no more powerful help, or stronger incentive to virtue than the example of the virtuous. The way to virtue through precepts is long and difficult; that which conducts us by example, is short, easy, and secure. It teaches us without being perceived to teach, and without assuming the air of a master; hence pride, which recoils at precepts, makes no opposition to the insinuations of example; and the other passions are silenced. Example moreover shows the practice of virtue possible and easy, points out to us the path in which we are to walk, and leads us as it were by the hand into it. Discourses only represent virtue in the abstract, but example renders it sensible, and clothes it as it were with a body; and its impressions are deeper and are made with pleasure, because they are insinuated through all the senses. Hence, the force of example is incredible, and almost irresistible, as even the heathen philosophers and poets have observed. Seneca lays down this as the first rule, if we desire to shun vice and practise virtue. "If you would avoid vice, retire far from the examples of the wicked. Seek good company; live with Cato and with Lælius." Senec. ep. 104. "Nothing more

effectually promotes the interest of virtue or stops the progress of vice than the company of good men. Their behaviour, their conversation, will insensibly sink into the soul, and their appearance, and even their silence may be useful to us." Id. ep. 94. This maxim of philosophers is the voice of nature, and the dictate of reason. The most sacred oracles of the Holy Ghost repeat to us the same lesson. " He that herds with the wise, will himself be wise." Prov. xiii. " Keep company with the elderly and the wise," &c. Eccl. vi.

So powerful is the force of good example, that it was a saying of St. Mathias the apostle, " that the faithful sins, if his neighbour sins," as St. Clemens of Alexandria mentions, Strom. l. 1, p. 748, *i. e.* so edifying ought the life of a Christian to be, that his example should suffice to restrain the wicked, and teach them virtue. And St. Justin observed to the heathens, that many heathens by living among Christians, and seeing the example of their virtue, had been worked into a change of their manners; from being violent, tyrannical, and passionate, were become meek and affable, and by seeing the patience, firmness, and contempt of the world, which Christians showed, had learned themselves some degree of the same virtues. Apol. 2, (nunc 1.) p. 127. St. Jerom, speaking of a virtuous family, says, that Jove himself by such company and example would have become a Christian.

3. If virtuous example has such force and such charms to invite others to an imitation, we must necessarily conclude, that the conversation of scandalous sinners is much more powerful in communicating its poison; whereas vice finds greater dispositions in our corrupt nature, and suits more with our depraved inclinations and passions. On this account, where necessity and justice permit it, we are bound to shun the scandalous company of sinners. This is the strict and indispensable precept of God. " We warn you to shun every man that goes astray." 1 Thess. iii. When the Hebrews entered the land of Canaan, God forbad them all alliance with the heathen nations. " Take care never to contract a friendship with the inhabitants of this country." Exod. xxxiv. " For they will certainly induce you to adopt their gods." Ib. Solomon, though the wisest of men, and before his sin a saint and prophet, by neglecting this rule forfeited the grace of God, and lapsed into the impiety and extravagance of idolatry. This law was inculcated figuratively by the distinction of clean and unclean creatures, as Origen observes, Hom. 7, in Levit. The unclean owls represent sinners, from whose converse we are bound to contain ourselves. It was likewise signified by another law, by which lepers were declared by God unclean, and it was forbidden to touch or have any communication with them. If this precaution were necessary to prevent the danger of infection from a contagious bodily distemper, how much more necessary is the same law for the health of the soul? For " evil communication corrupts good manners." 1 Cor. xv. " The discourse of the wicked creeps like a crab." 2 Tim. ii. Hence St. Paul repeats this precept on several occasions, as when he says: " If the man whom you call brother be a fornicator, or a detracter, or a thief, you must not even eat with him." 1 Cor. v.

4. To enter into a league of strict amity with the wicked is to affront and contemn God. Are not all notorious and public sinners the declared enemies of God? What would you think of a son who should league himself in heart and affection with the persecutors or murderers of his father? Would not you justly abhor him as a monster in nature? But

is not this what you do by choosing the wicked for your confidants? As long as they continue notoriously to boast in iniquity, there is between them and God an irreconcilable hatred. And you in some measure lean to them by your friendship with them, and involve yourself in the punishment which they deserve; at least in the temporal judgments which their impiety often draws upon their heads. When Josaphat, a religious prince, was allied with Achab, a wicked apostate, for reasons of state, he was severely condemned by God, by whose command the prophet Jehu declared to him, 2 Kings xix.: "You assist the wicked, and associate with those who hate God, on which account you deserve to be rebuked."

5. By this we also give just scandal to our neighbours. They know how severely God forbids such company; they know the danger and the consequences of it; therefore we incur their censure, and the disgrace and infamy annexed to the character of sinners; and by our example we invite others to do the same. They who see us always with the swearers, the debauched, the public sinners, will think us like them with whom we herd; nor can we call their censure rash, or unreasonable and unjust. One who has an abhorrence of sin, could never take delight in seeing or hearing sin. A true servant of God ought to be pierced with grief to hear his name affronted and blasphemed; to see him offended. How can a man be touched with zeal for his divine honour, or charity for the soul of his neighbour, who can hear with indifference such language? Pious persons never hear a rash oath or impious word without an inward feeling of grief and horror; and it is the custom of many on every such occasion to say in their heart some short prayer, to make some act of divine praise, desiring to repair the injury done to their God, or some short ejaculation for the unhappy soul of him that has sinned in their presence. How could a dutiful subject be delighted in company which always talks treason? or how could a son bear the society of, or love as a friend, one, who never ceases to abuse, revile, and slander his good parent? Even how could any one love another, and keep company with those who continually abused and calumniated him? No; men will naturally judge, that he who loves the company of public sinners, is not himself averse from sin. The lovers of learning love the society of learned men; those who are devoured by a worldly spirit, seek the conversation of persons who are filled with the same, and whose language and carriage breathe that air; and so of others: but the virtuous seek the company of those whose prudence, temperance, charity, religion, &c. give them a true esteem of their persons; and whose example may be to them an incitement to virtue. It is a proverb in all languages: "Birds of a feather flock together;" and again with the philosopher: "Show me what company he keeps, and I will tell you what he is." It is a rule, which reason, experience, and authority equally teaches. By this will men judge that, if we love and frequent bad company, we are ourselves no enemies to sin, or at least shall not long continue so. If we converse with drunkards, swearers, profane or lewd persons, we either love their vices, or at least shall not be long free from them.

6. Bad company is not only in itself injurious to God and scandalous to our neighbours; but it is most pernicious to ourselves. We are bound to shun all immediate occasions of sin. To court the danger or the temptation is to be our own tempters; it is to abandon God, and the means to which he has annexed his succours and protection. It is a presumption

highly injurious and provoking to his divine Majesty, who always withdraws his graces from those who by it fly in his very face, and walk forth to meet and invite his enemy. Now among all the immediate occasions of sin none are so fatal, so enormous, or so expressly forbidden by the law of God as evil company. Hence, the prophets and saints, though confirmed in virtue by long habit, and fenced by fervour and the stongest graces, always were most careful to shun the company of the wicked; which if they had not done, they were sensible that God would have immediately withdrawn his graces and forsaken them: for no weakness against sin is so great as a presumptuous confidence in one's self. All our strength is from God; and he denies his succour to those who are self-sufficient, and who tempt him. If the saints were obliged to fear and avoid this danger; if the greatest prophets had not strength to encounter it; can we wilfully throw ourselves into it? We might more easily raise a dead man to life than escape ruin, if we fling ourselves head-long down the precipice.

7. Can any one touch pitch without being defiled by it? as the Wise Man asks us; so neither can a person frequent bad company without losing his innocence. Who would choose for his diversion or amusement to live in a pest-house, continually to converse with persons infected with the plague, and always to breathe a deadly contagious air? Yet, that is not so dangerous to the body as wicked company is to the soul. And this is a truth so evident, and in which all men agree so universally, that to offer to prove it before men who have the least tincture of religion, or even of reflection or experience, would be as if one should set himself to prove that the sun shines, whilst its rays beat on our eyes. Whence, Tertullian exclaims: "Who does not know that faith is lost by bad company? Who can doubt but faith is by little and little effaced by conversing with an infidel spirit? Who can doubt but a religious soul will be quite changed by the example of an irregular friend? Who can doubt but the most humble will thereby become proud, the most chaste lewd, and the most devout quite worldly and dissipated? Who is there that does not know this?" Wherefore the Wise Man begins his advice on virtue with this lesson: "My son, if sinners shall flatter thee with their caresses, consent not to them." Prov. i. 10. "Walk not thou with them, refrain thy foot from their paths." v. 15. But you say you are resolved not to be moved by his bad example or discourse. I believe indeed this to be your purpose; but I am assured that your resolution is vain. You are not sensible of the force of such example; nor will you perceive its effects upon your own heart, till it will be quite perverted and changed, and you will be no longer the same man. You have his impious example before your eyes; his evil discourse often beats upon your ears; you are the depository of his sentiments; by hearing him speak, by seeing him act, you become accustomed to think as he does, to talk and to act as he does. At first his lewd sallies give you some displeasure, and excite in you a horror; but by degrees this insensibly wears off; you will hear him soon without this disgust, and at last with pleasure; nay, you will yourself ere long imitate him in your actions. Who does not know that the most resolute virtue, which torments or death could never have daunted, will by this means be shaken, and at length destroyed? Familiarity has this effect even in indifferent things; nay, in those that are shocking. A heathen philosopher observes: "Such is the power of company, that we unknow-

ingly imitate the manners of those with whom we live, as Plato's disciples imitated his broad shoulders, Aristotle's friends his bald pate, and Alexander's followers his crooked neck and his rough voice." Plutarch, l. de discrimine amici et adulatoris. Who then can be so foolish as to persuade himself that he can converse with the vicious or worldly persons, &c. without contracting some of their spirit? No, you esteem, you love and honour your friend; and you will excuse his vices, and will at last honour them. Thus the most modest young man, by frequent interviews with a person who is dangerous to him, becomes at last lost even to shame; thus the most temperate becomes a sot, and the most virtuous a profligate debauchee; in the same manner as the Jews, by living among idolaters, "contracted alliances with the Gentiles, and learned their manners." Ps. cv. But you will say: Must I then lose and abandon my friend, renounce my diversion and amusement, and turn recluse? As to a friend, you must not only part with him, but even lose an eye or a hand, if it were a scandal to your soul. Nothing can be put in balance with your great and only interest. "It is better to go to heaven with one eye, than," &c. As to recreation, if your passion at present makes you incapable of relishing any other object than that which soothes it, this slavery and restraint requires a more violent remedy; but your joy will be the greater in your cure; and then you will find more pleasure within the bounds of virtue, than the thorns of passion could ever afford.

8. This rule is general; this law regards both young and old, sinners and saints; but it more especially concerns youth. Their passions are stronger and more lively; the fire of their age is more active; their want of experience and prudence makes them be less upon their guard; and it is their present business to set out on moulding and forming their minds, which are open to, and susceptible of, the impressions which they receive. Thus, we see youth usually forming themselves from, and imbibing the maxims and the spirit of those with whom they converse. Therefore, the choice of good company is of the utmost importance for the pious education of youth. All attention, precepts, and instructions, are rendered fruitless through the baneful influence of bad company. The innocent age is most apt to be tainted with vice; and the seeds of pride, untractableness, quarrelsomeness, and every passion, take deep root in the tender souls, which are not to be afterwards extirpated without the greatest difficulty. St. Austin, by this corrupter of virtue, lost all the first impressions he had received from the example and instructions of his holy mother, St. Monica; he ascribes to bad company his fall into the most criminal habits, and writes of himself, that by this fatal stratagem of the devil, "I went on so blindly, that I was ashamed to be outdone in wickedness, while my companions were boasting of their crimes, and assuming the honour of superior guilt. Not to incur their displeasure I advanced in profligacy, and when I found that I could not equal them by real crimes, I had recourse to invention, that I might not suffer in their opinion by innocence." Conf. c. 2 & 3. Parents, masters of families, and all you who have received from God authority over others, with an obligation of watching over their souls, and of conducting them in the divine service, listen and consider your weighty obligation in this point. You are bound to be vigilant, and to watch assiduously, that children, apprentices, servants, &c. under your care never fall into this pit. Remember that this point is of all others the most important; without which all your labour and care will be lost.

A modern philosopher who has written a famous book on education, speaks as follows on this head: "Having named company, I am almost ready to throw away my pen, and trouble you no farther on this subject: for since that does more than all the precepts, rules, and instructions, methinks it is almost wholly in vain to make a long discourse on other things; and to talk of that almost to no purpose. For you will say: What shall I do with my son? If I keep him always at home, he will be in danger of being my young master; if I let him go abroad it is impossible to keep him from the contagion of rudeness and vice." Locke on Education, § 70, p. 76. If parents send their children abroad, let it be their care to take all prudent precautions that they may be guarded against this danger, and linked with good acquaintance.

Give me leave also to address myself to you tender souls, which are stepping into the world; and suffer me to recommend to you one word of advice, which may be said to comprise all precepts and lessons in one. Be infinitely circumspect and cautious in the choice of your acquaintance and play-fellows: converse with the serious and virtuous, that you may learn that spirit; but steer your course always wide off the fatal rock of the sirens, or you will most certainly perish. Take this rule along with you to your schools, and to all places wherever you go. Imitate St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen, as the latter says, (Or. in laudem S. Basil,) when they went to Athens to study: "Neither did we keep company with the rude, wicked, or impudent, but with those who were the best and the most virtuous; nor with the quarrelsome, but with the mild and the most peaceable, and those whose conversation brought us much profit; being persuaded that it is an illusion to seek the company of sinners, that we may convert them; it is far more to be feared that they will communicate their poison to us."

Some may ask, who are to be understood by bad company? I answer, all public scandalous sinners, habitual swearers, drunkards, and lewd debauchees, who use indecent liberties contrary to modesty in dress, words, and lightness of their behaviour; which last sort of bad company is so much the more pernicious, as that passion is in itself of all others the most dangerous to the heart. Under the same name of bad company we must comprise tale-bearers, detracters, and above all, those who make a jest of holy things, whose profane blasphemies and impieties sap the very foundation of religion. Hence, we may infer with what care a Christian is bound to shun public assemblies where such scandalous persons are admitted, as is the unhappy case in England. Men fear not openly to advance impious or lewd discourses in such places, which in any other country shame would check; and such persons are often the loudest, and engross the chief part of the discourse.

9. This law is to be understood with certain limitations. For in some circumstances bad company cannot be entirely shunned, as in prisons, where to avoid it is physically impossible; but all intimate connections must even there be shunned. The same in some other cases is morally impossible, as where children under age have scandalous parents, or a wife a scandalous husband, whom they cannot leave without a violation of the laws of justice. But where necessity or other obligations render this rule impossible, persons are bound to arm themselves against the danger with the utmost diligence, by assiduous prayer, watchfulness, and a holy conversation. Nor is this rule to be extended to those sinners, whose

conversation is no way scandalous. Even with regard to the scandalous we are not to carry this rule too far; we owe to these a commerce of charity and common duties, against which we should notoriously offend, should we shun them as if we treated them like excommunicated persons. We must converse with them, as Christ did with the Pharisees and publicans; as far as charity obliges. We must in this imitate the conduct of God towards sinners.

10. God is with sinners, and he is not with them. He is with them by his immensity, and by the necessity of their existence. He is with them, as the Creator is necessarily with all his creatures, by his wisdom to govern them and keep the universe in due order; by his omnipotence to move them; and by his goodness, from the effects of which he excepts not even sinners. But in other respects he withdraws himself from them. "God has departed from me," said Saul, 1 Kings xxviii. For no sooner is a man fallen into sin, than God breaks with him all that near alliance, of which his charity or grace was the link; and in this sense he is said to fly from them, to leave them. He is no longer with them by that tender affection with which he cherishes the just; nor by his special protection and providence, which he promises to his servants; nor by the communication of his singular gifts, which he confers on those that love and serve him; nor by his union in the sacraments. So must we live with the wicked. "We must live with the wicked so as to tolerate, not to imitate them." St. Aug. "Otherwise we ought to quit this world." 1 Cor. v. The time of separation is not yet come; the good must live with the bad, till the master of the family shall take away all scandals by gathering his elect to himself. In the mean time we must bear the trials to which this circumstance exposes us.

11. We must moreover make it the subject of our triumphs, and the occasion of our virtue. Thus does God bear the wicked so as to draw from them good and the exaltation of his own glory. "He makes a good use of the sinner, and he would not suffer him to exist, if such use could not be made of him." St. Aug. As that father says, he employs the heathens to show the power of his grace in their conversion by twelve fishermen; the heretics and schismatics to demonstrate the unchangeableness of faith, and the firm foundation of his church, which no assaults can shake; the Jews, to manifest the truth of his prophecies, to which their miserable scattered remains bear every where an incontestable evidence for the conviction of the incredulous; all sinners, to show his goodness and his patience in inviting them to mercy, and his justice in the punishment of those who harden their hearts to final impenitence. We must also draw our own spiritual profit from the company of the wicked. First, by seeing their falls and blindness we must be stirred up the more to humble ourselves, to tremble lest we should also fall, and to live in stricter watchfulness and fervour. St. Teresa writes, Advice 7, p. 244, t. 5, that she profited much by every one of her companions, though she had a great multitude of sisters, because whilst she endeavoured to imitate all the good she saw any of them practise, she never intermeddled to correct the imperfections of any, but fortified herself against them. Secondly, we must bear the humiliations and persecutions we meet with through them as our trials. Many complain of the dangers of their condition from a wife, a husband, a neighbourhood, and murmur under their trials; but they know not the advantages offered them by these very means. They say it is impossible to resist so much bad example, to bear so many trials;

whereas it is by them they must be saved, or through their abuse and malice damned. They can be saved only by the means which God has appointed for that purpose; and these very trials have been ordained by him in infinite wisdom and mercy for their sanctification. He would not have them to work out their salvation in any other place, or in any other manner than this situation of which they complain. This is just that which must save them. These scandals and bad examples avoided will crown them; these trials borne with patience will enrich them with all virtues.

Thirdly, the scandals of the wicked must move us to zeal for God's honour, and to compassion for their souls: we must weep and pray for their conversion. Lastly, we must labour to gain them to Christ by seasonable advice, or at least by setting them a good example of humility, patience, and charity. "That considering your good works they may glorify God." 1 Peter ii. "I will teach the wicked thy ways, and the ungodly shall be converted to thee." Ps. l. The presence of Cato at the festival of Flora restrained the people from demanding the usual obscene ceremonies, as long as he stayed, being awed by his virtue.

12. Thus must we profit by the very company of the wicked. We owe to them all the duties and offices of sincere charity, and must show them all the external marks of respect and affection; but we must shun any familiar commerce or intimacy with them, nor make ourselves their confidants or companions. "I have not sat in the council of vanity, and I will not associate with the workers of iniquity; I have hated the congregation of the wicked." Ps. xxv. We must avoid all particular friendship with them, and depart from their meetings. "Carry not the yoke with infidels." 1 Cor. vi. "Retire from the dwellings of the wicked, lest ye be involved in their sins."

Farther, all masters of families, and those who have jurisdiction and authority over others, are bound to expel all scandalous livers out of their houses. When God had Josue put to death, and removed out of the way the scandalous Achan, he said: "Rise and sanctify the people." Jos. vii. This would sanctify families. Remove the vicious servant who infects your house, and you will make it a house of piety; the quarrelsome incendiary, the detracter or gossiping tale-bearer, and you will make it a dwelling of peace; the profane swearer, and you will avert from your house the dreadful curses and heavy judgments which his impiety daily calls down from heaven upon it; the girl of light airs, of immodest carriage, or vain in her dress and appearance, the lover of romances, play-books, and stage entertainments, and you will preserve your family, your children, and yourself, from that spreading contagion. Let all who serve you be sensible that you in the first place require that they serve God. Thus remove scandals from your own houses. Those which fall not under our jurisdiction, we must bear with patience and perseverance: we must even by them sanctify our own souls. It is the height of impiety to sin in the land of saints. Isa. xxvi. This it is that exaggerates its malice; therefore "he shall not see the glory of God." Thus to be pious amidst evil will enhance the triumph of virtue. Job was a saint amidst idolaters, Moses in the court of Pharaoh. St. Lewis on the throne shut his eyes to the dazzling pomp of human grandeur, and forgot not God in the licentiousness of arms and tumult. No one can be crowned who has not fought; nor can any fight without dangers. To all his elect will God say: "You have remained with me in the time of temptation." Luke xxii.

DISCOURSE XXIV.

ON RASH JUDGMENT.

1. THE apostle pronounces the love of our neighbour to be the perfection of the gospel, and the fulfilling of the law. Our divine Redeemer styles it by excellency, his precept, and the precept of the new law. To make its bond the more sacred among his followers, he unites them into one mystical body, cemented by his precious blood, and vouchsafes to be himself their head, and to make them all his joint members, and to feed them all with the same divine food, his own adorable body and blood. Hence to sin against charity among Christians is for them to break all these most sacred and inviolable ties, to trample under foot this his darling precept, and sacrilegiously to tear asunder his mystical members. Our tender common Father and ever adorable Redeemer has instituted mutual charity as the characteristic by which his disciples should be distinguished. But now-a-days, alas! could an infidel know a Christian by this mark? Do not jealousies, quarrels, enmities, detractions, and the like, reign so universally as to be esteemed innocent, and even points of honour and good breeding? But nothing shows more glaringly how this divine precept, this basis of Christian morality, is neglected and trodden under foot, than to see how much rash judgments and suspicions prevail. We are not content to expose and traduce the least failings of our fellow-members; but we suspect and condemn their most innocent actions. Nothing can argue a more flagrant want of the spirit of charity among us; yet nothing is more common even among many who pretend to devotion. How many make no scruple at all of it, and blinded by pride, flatter themselves, that it proceeds from a holy zeal, and their aversion to evil? To disabuse them, and to endeavour to root out so pernicious a principle, and so grievous a sin, we must consider how unjust and criminal this vice is in itself, how detestable in its sources, and how many ways it may be committed.

2. The first circumstance which shows the enormity of this vice is, that all judgment is unjust, if it want authority and jurisdiction. Almighty God has erected among men an external court of judicature, in order to maintain public peace and justice, and has established in his church the internal court of penance. Exclusive of these cases, he has given no jurisdiction to any man to judge in any way his neighbour. On the contrary, he has most solemnly reserved to himself this sovereign prerogative; and, as he is Lord paramount over all creatures, so he styles himself Judge of the living and the dead. This is the distinguishing title of his sovereignty; and he will suffer no partner in this supreme authority. He is the Creator of all men, and their sovereign Lord and Master. They belong to him, soul and body, all whatever they are; they are entirely his. He therefore, and he alone, has essentially from himself and of his own right, lawful authority to judge men. Even Christ, as man, is vested with this right of judging men, only as given him by his Father: "The Father has given all judgment to his Son." John v. 22. "It is he, who is appointed by God, Judge of the living and of the dead." Acts x. 42. Therefore, if a man presume to judge his brother, he invades the divine

prerogative, and usurps the right and jurisdiction of Christ. "Whoever judges before the coming of Christ is Antichrist, because he usurps the authority of Christ," says St. Anastasius the Sinaite, Hom. de synax. p. 906. "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou despise thy brother? for we shall all stand before the tribunal of Christ." Rom. xiv. 10. We are all equally to plead our cause and to receive our sentence at the same bar, and can pretend to no jurisdiction over our fellows without invading the rights of our common sovereign Judge and God. "Who art thou, that judgest another's servant? It is to his lord that he stands or falls." Rom. xiv. 4. "He who detracts his brother, or judges his brother, detracts the law and judges the law. There is one Legislator and Judge who can destroy and save. But who art thou, who judgest thy neighbour?" James iv. 11, 12. He who rashly judges his neighbour, tacitly condemns the law of God, which forbids him to judge; and he who is a sinful blind creature, usurps that authority which the sovereign Legislator reserves to himself.

Even Christ, when he came to redeem the world, said "he did not come to judge the world, but that the world might be saved by him." John iii. 17. "All power, all things in heaven and earth were given to him;" John iii. 35; and he was constituted by his Father, Lord of all things, and Judge of the living and the dead. Yet he would not condemn, because his hour was not yet come, before the day of every one's trial. This merciful quality was so conspicuous in him, that his enemies made it the ground of their stratagems and snares to destroy him. They brought to him a woman taken in adultery, sure from his constant principle and practice of mercy, that he would condemn no one. Whence they designed to accuse him of acquitting a person, whom the law condemned. He by his divine wisdom eluded their craft; yet he refused to condemn her, though guilty of so flagrant a crime. "Neither will I condemn thee." John viii. 11. If he, who was Lord of all, who read the secrets of hearts, and whose judgment was truth itself, whilst he most zealously reprehended the vices of all, would judge no one, shall we without authority, without knowledge or justice, who at most see only the exterior of actions, presume to judge, to anticipate the divine justice, and to forestal the day appointed by God for his judgment! "You judge according to the flesh. I judge not any one. And if I judge, my judgment is true," said our divine Redeemer. John viii. 15. Whence St. Paul conjures us: "Judge not before the time; until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of hearts." 1 Cor. iv. 5.

3. Rash judgment is also a grievous injury against our neighbour. A good reputation, and a reasonable esteem in the opinion of others, is undoubtedly one of the most valuable of temporal goods, which a man can count in his possession. It is far preferable to riches, and second to nothing but life. We are bound to entertain this good opinion of our neighbour; and this is a strict right due to him by the law of nature, unless he has forfeited it by his evident infamy. Doubtful claims are to be interpreted on the safer side, according to that dictate of the law of nature, and axiom of all positive laws: that no man is to be condemned, unless he stand first convicted. In case of groundless pretences and suspicions he is not to be stripped of his birth-right. Hence rash judgment against our neighbour is a sin against justice. It likewise transgresses the law of charity. It is the golden rule of the law of nature, acknow-

ledged by the very infidels, that we do not that to others, which we would not that others should do to us. Now put the case to be your own. Should another on slight grounds regard you as a hypocrite, a cheat, a drunkard, or the like, crimes which you abhor; or should he interpret your innocent actions in a bad sense, and regard you with disdain and contempt in his heart, should not you think his proceeding highly injurious? How then can you justify the same conduct in yourselves? You may value yourself on your large alms, strict justice in money affairs, long devotions: whilst you rashly judge others guilty, you cannot pass for innocent in the sight of God. You may detest theft; yet you are guilty of a more grievous injustice, and rob your neighbour of what is more precious than riches. You, perhaps, commit a greater crime than that would be, which you condemn in another, as St. Ambrose observes, Apol. David, c. 4.

It is not to be wondered at, that God condemns most severely this sin, which wounds our neighbour, and also attacks his divine Majesty in so tender a point. "If you knew what this meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice, you would never have condemned the innocent," Mat. xii. 7, says our blessed Saviour. He has moreover made the observance of this precept our own special interest, by positively declaring that he, in the dreadful day of his justice, will judge us according to the rule which we shall have followed in judging our neighbours. "Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." Mat. vii. 1, 2. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned." Luke vi. 36, 37. St. Anastasius the Sinaite relates a remarkable example from his own knowledge, (loco cit.) A certain monk, who had led a very tepid and negligent life, obtained the grace of a sincere conversion, and was favoured in his last sickness with the vision of an angel, in which he was assured that he should find mercy and pardon, because he had never judged ill of any, and had always forgiven all injuries. After which he met death with incredible joy and confidence, and smiling under the pangs of his agony and death, passed to glory.

4. Men not only judge without authority, and in defiance of justice, charity, and the express law of God, and by an insolent invasion of his supreme right; but also without knowledge of the cause. Their judgment is often false even concerning external actions or obligations. "Vain are the sons of men; the sons of men are liars in the balances;" Ps. lxi. 10; *i. e.* they often weigh things by false weights; often some condemn what others applaud, and few attain to the truth. At least they do not see all the circumstances of the actions of others, and never penetrate their hearts or secret intentions, upon which all depends before God. God alone is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. iv. 12. "Neither is there any creature invisible in his sight; but all things are naked and open to his eyes," v. 13. But men in this world are blind, short-sighted, and liable to a thousand errors even in their own concerns; and infinitely more so in those of others. God will at the last day place all the secrets of hearts in the noon-day light; but now we are all in darkness. During the winter, when the country is covered with snow, all the earth wears the same appearance; we cannot then discern the objects which lie upon it, but are easily deceived in our conjectures. We may take a

deep ditch to be the high road, or mistake a dunghill for a delightful garden, or a barren oak for a fruit-tree. This life is like winter; everything is as it were covered and concealed. Yet we foolishly pretend, to know almost all things we see, and confidently judge of the actions of others, which are of all other things the most impenetrable to us, and which it is the highest arrogance for us to pronounce upon.

5. Men blind themselves by so many pretexts with regard to rash judgment, that though it be, perhaps, one of the most common of all sins, yet few ever think themselves guilty of it. They frequently persuade themselves that they judge upon sufficient grounds, or that it is not in a matter of weight or the like. We must however take notice, that unless the judgment be rash, it is not of itself criminal. If the guilt be evident, we are not commanded to renounce our reason or our senses; nor can it ever be lawful to extenuate the crime by excusing or defending the sin itself. To understand the nature of the sin, we must distinguish four degrees in rash judgment: a doubt, a suspicion, a probable judgment, and a firm or certain judgment. A doubt is when the mind floats between two opinions, so as neither to incline to the one side nor to the other. To suspect the evil is to lean towards an assent; to believe it probably true is to assent, but with hesitation, and thinking that the opposite may possibly be true. A firm judgment excludes all doubt or hesitation. Any of these four degrees, if perfect and fully deliberate in a point considerably disadvantageous to our neighbour, is a mortal sin both against justice and against charity. Some divines rank mere doubts and suspicions among venial sins, unless they proceed from hatred or some other criminal passion; because, say they, S. Augustin (Tract. 90, in Joan. t. 3, p. 720,) and St. Thomas, (c. 2, 2 qu. 60, a. 3, quodl. 12, q. 22, art. 34, fol. 161, t. 8,) rank suspicions among those sins of human frailty, without which this life is not led. But they speak of light or passing suspicions, which are not perfect and fully deliberate: for St. Thomas says: "If a man begin to doubt of the probity of another;" and St. Augustin: "We cannot perceive our own suspicions." And in other places both these holy doctors declare suspicions or doubtful judgments to be mortal sins. St. Thomas, qu. 70, a. 4, writes: "Whoever harbours a bad opinion of another without sufficient cause, does him an injury and despises him. Where the evidence of another's malice is not manifest, we are bound to esteem him good by putting a good construction on what is doubtful." See also qu. 69, a. 3, ad. 3. And St. Augustin, Serm. 306, ol. 112, de div. c. 9, t. 5, p. 1242. "Most of the evils among men arise from false suspicions. You suspect that a man hates you, who perhaps loves you, and by this evil suspicion become his enemy. What shall he do whom you do not believe? He cannot show you his heart." And ep. 153, ol. 54: "We almost all love to call or believe our suspicions to be a knowledge." And l. 2, de serm. Domini in monte, c. 18, t. 3, p. 224, on those words "Judge not:" "We are commanded to interpret well actions in which the motive is doubtful." And in Ps. 147, p. 1660. t. 4: "Peace does not judge in doubts, does not condemn what she does not know; is inclined rather to believe well than to suspect ill: she says, I know not what he is. What do I lose, if I believe him to be a good man? It is lawful to be upon our guard, lest he should be otherwise; but condemn him not. This is what peace commands us." These doctors therefore agree with the rest of the fathers, from whom several passages are gathered by Natalis Alexander, &c.

Whence the best divines teach,[a] that a suspicion and doubt in a matter of weight is a mortal sin, if it be very rash and groundless, and if the mind deliberately harbour it, at least for a considerable time. For the interior act of the will is a mortal sin, when the exterior act would be such, *i. e.* a grievous injustice and prejudice. And such a suspicion, when fully deliberate, permanent, and unjust, is a real grievous injury; *e. g.* that a person is dishonest, lustful, &c. &c.

6. That evil is to be looked upon as a matter of great consequence, which is a great infamy or prejudice; as the imputation of any mortal sin, unless in the case of a person who shows by his conduct, that he disregards what others may think, *e. g.* by living in a public habit of drinking, swearing, &c. Also some wilful sin attributed to a person of eminent virtue, or any natural defect of birth, capacity, &c. will be grievously injurious. If the judgment or suspicion be not rash, but prudent and on sufficient grounds, it is not of its own nature any breach of this precept; and the grounds which would not excuse a formed positive judgment, may sometimes suffice to make a suspicion reasonable and just. But there is danger of iniquity lying to itself; for men always imagine their most unjust opinions to be reasonable and prudent. This arises from the blinds and prejudices of self-love and pride; whereas the passions and want of charity make things appear certain, which are not even probable. Let us examine some of the grounds on which men judge of the actions of others. *First*, divines agree with St. Thomas, that a public report cannot found a prudent judgment. A public fame, which is a constant and uniform voice of the people, grounded on the known testimony of persons of prudence and authority, that would amount to a half proof in civil, though not in criminal causes, is of weight, and may deserve our assent; but a rumour, without any certain author or known grounds, is the most deceitful and false of all vouchers. Daily experience must convince us that such reports generally owe their rise to malice, suspicions, or mistakes; or at least that they have been entirely changed by the rehearsers, even credible persons in other respects, especially in cases of enmity; consequently such rumours can never be grounds to condemn another upon. When the clamour of Sodom was multiplied, "The Lord said, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry which is come unto me." Gen. xviii. 20, 21. Say always before you believe a report, I know not; I must see first. A prince, who acts otherwise, and believes informers and tale-bearers, is easily imposed upon by calumnies, and multiplies injustices and evils. Prov. xxix. Others make their rash suppositions and suspicions pass for demonstrations and convictions; will you encourage and believe them, and yet pretend to be innocent?

"Never entertain any disadvantageous opinions of your neighbour; never give way to groundless suspicions and rash judgments concerning him; but throw them back, when they offer themselves, with a reflection upon yourself. Lord, how quick-sighted am I in regard to the faults of others; but how blind in discovering my own? A charitable man makes the most candid judgment of every body; and when his neighbour's actions are capable of a double interpretation, he puts the best upon them. The ordinary rule of judging others is by ourselves; and when our own incli-

[a] Dom. Soto, Medina, Bannes, Sayrus, Sylvius, Henric. a S. Ignat. Nat. Alex. Antoine, Collet, &c.

nations are bad, and our wills bent upon that which is evil, we easily persuade ourselves, that our neighbour governs himself by the same measure." Nelson.

Secondly, it is a common but uncertain way of reasoning; only such a one could have committed the theft or other crime. Men know not how the thing was stolen; so they imagine it could not be done any other way but that which occurs to them. Nothing can be more precarious than this random sort of conjecture; and if we examine we shall not find one in a thousand, that is censured upon it really guilty.

Thirdly, because they observe some circumstances in the behaviour of another, and see him exposed to an occasion, they conclude him guilty. But often what is an occasion to one, may not be so to another; or some necessity placed him in it, and he may have triumphed over the danger.

7. Suppose you see one commit an action, which appears evil to you, charity will find many excuses. If the malice be doubtful, it commands us always to interpret it favourably. What you think unlawful, another may regard as lawful, and be excused before God. Nothing can be more unreasonable than for you to arraign another upon your private opinion, whilst he has as much right to be of another. "Let every one abound in his own sense, and let not him who eats despise him who fasts." Rom. xiv. 3. If you are better instructed in the truth, keep your gift in God; but do not condemn the conscience of others. In a word, so many circumstances in the actions of others may deceive us, that it is generally very rash in us to pronounce them guilty. Outward appearances are very deceitful. St. John the alms-giver was accustomed often to relate several examples of great servants of God, who had been falsely condemned, and often where all circumstances had concurred to make them appear guilty. Whereupon he used frequently to exclaim: "How many hidden servants has Almighty God unknown to the world, and condemned by men!" Heli reproached Hannah with drunkenness, for what was the effect of affliction and fervour of prayer. The Pharisee condemned St. Mary Magdalen, when she was a saint. We cannot see the heart of a neighbour; yet it is on this that the action depends. Excuse then the action by the intention.

If the malice be too evident, true charity will never fail to suggest excuses, which at least will extenuate the crime. Christ found one for the greatest of sins possible, that of his crucifiers: "They know not what they do." Say to yourself, that the sin was committed perhaps through ignorance, surprise, accident, or at least some sudden and violent temptation.[a] You know not how many conflicts your brother sustained before he fell; how long he resisted; nor how gloriously he may rise again. Reflect on your own deserts and unworthiness, and fear lest you do worse to-morrow than he has done to-day. Judas became a traitor, and the thief on the cross a saint in an instant. Therefore, judge no one, lest you judge one whom you will see above you in glory.

8. Three things are necessary to a just sentence or judgment: jurisdiction, knowledge of the cause, and justice or equity. We have seen, that the two first are wanting in rash judgment. The third condition is still more essentially wanting, as will plainly appear if we consider what are the sources from which it springs. It is a sin, that can be the effect

[a] Excusa intentionem si opus non potes; puta ignorantiam, puta subreptionem; puta casum, says St. Bernard, Serm. 40, in Cant. p. 1411.

only of an excessive corruption of the heart, and of superlative malice. No provocation, no pleasure, no interest, induce men to it, but merely the depravity of the will. The first grand root of rash judgments is antipathy, dissension, or hatred. This uncharitable disposition of the heart turns every thing that our supposed enemy can say or do, to a bad sense. It is inconceivable, how many rash judgments and suspicions proceed from it. A second no less fertile source is envy or jealousy. If a person have conceived a displeasure against another; or if he look upon others as his rivals in reputation, esteem, or any qualification, he turns his eyes from all their perfections, and can find nothing but faults in all they do. He finds a secret pleasure in hearing others censure them, and so far blinds himself as to call this base passion, holy zeal. Their most virtuous actions are criminal in his eyes. The Pharisees were no sooner prepossessed by envy and hatred against Christ, than his divine countenance, which had charms of virtue to all others, seemed to breathe nothing but hypocrisy to them. His words were imposture, and his miracles the effects of art and magic in their opinion. Mat. ix. A third parent of rash judgment is vice. A man addicted to a vicious habit has a strange propensity to judge of others by himself. Eccl. x. St. Augustin, l. 3, doctr. christ. c. 19, observes, that the lustful imagine no one can live entirely chaste, and think the innocent actions of others tainted with that foul passion. Suetonius mentions, that Nero would not be persuaded that any other men lived more chaste, but said they were only hypocrites, and committed the same crimes, though privately. Thus the ambitious, the covetous, the revengeful, &c., measure the hearts of others by their own, in the actions which they see them perform. Men, therefore, by rashly condemning others, seem to betray the vices of their own hearts, especially an intolerable pride, which is a fourth and general cause of rash judgments. Humility is always occupied on its own sins and miseries. But pride is blind to these, and, whilst it seeks to prefer itself to others, studies to pry into and condemn their actions. So monstrous is the blindness and partiality of mankind in this respect, that most men take a malignant pleasure in judging ill of others, so that neither good nor bad can pass unreproved. If a man be free and affable, they call him light; if retired, haughty or melancholy; if cheerful, dissolute or mad. Virtue with them is design, craft, and hypocrisy; good-nature, dulness. The Jews said that St. John Baptist had a devil, because he fasted; and they called Christ a glutton and a drunkard, because they saw him eat and drink. Luke vii. 33. How many condemn others for crimes which they themselves commit? We see men every day imitate Achilles, who, whilst he was in the utmost fury himself, reproached Agamemnon with his passionate temper; and Agamemnon, who, while he was revenging a rape, committed another. Whence St. Paul says to those who fall into rash judgment: "Wherefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whoever judgest. For when thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou doest the things which thou judgest." Rom. ii. 1. Hence the ancient proverb, that men throw their own sins into a wallet behind their backs, but carry those of others before them always under their eyes; and St. Augustin describes men "as curious in prying into the conduct of others, but slow in correcting their own." Conf. l. 10, c. 2.

We may reduce all these sources of rash judgment to two: uncharitableness and pride. Charity and humility are the sovereign remedies of

this disorder. "Charity thinks no evil." 1 Cor. xiii. It inclines a man to the most favourable judgment of others in every thing. Those whom we truly love, we always study to excuse. We are blind to their real faults, as we may see in fond parents. Thus true charity is edified at every thing, and is ingenious in finding excuses for whatever may seem amiss; because its pleasure is in the good and happiness of every neighbour. Humility likewise is occupied in censuring and correcting its own faults, and finds ample matter of solicitude at home; it sees only its own sins. Our Saviour refers us to this consideration, when he says: "Why dost thou see a straw in thy brother's eye, whilst thou seest not a beam in thy own?" Matt. vii. 2. It is not zeal, but pride, which seeks to correct others without first amending its own scandalous faults. You will never convert your neighbour, unless you begin by yourself; then it will appear that you seek the honour of God. "First throw out the beam," &c. "You are not appointed judge of others' sins; nor has God given you any charge to pry into their hearts. You are commanded to judge yourself, not others. But you have inverted the order; and neglect to take any account of your own sins, but sift those of others. If you will consider others, examine not their sins, but have their good works before your eyes to stir up yourself to emulation in virtue," says St. Chrysostom, Hom. 65, al. 66, in Mat. t. 7, p. 643.

If others judge us, we must follow the advice of St. Gregory Nazianzen, who writes, ep. 67: "Look upon them as jackdaws watching the flight of an eagle. Have God only in view, and you will never go amiss." And, Or. ad eos qui ipsam cathedram etiam affectare dicebant!—"Others' judgments concerning us ought no more to interest us than their dreams."

As to the precept of not judging others, prudence, and the charity which we owe to ourselves, oblige us to be upon our guard as carefully as if we judged others treacherous; because we know that the world abounds with impiety and falsehood; and without this precaution we shall betray ourselves into certain ruin. But we must satisfy this duty without judging or suspecting others rashly, as St. Thomas observes. Parents, masters, and all superiors must watch and correct the faults of those under their charge. But all must shun rash judgment; this is of the strictest precept. Where the duty of a superior, or the like circumstances do not oblige us to examine in order to correct sins, never to judge at all is a virtue and counsel of our divine Redeemer of great importance. And the more perfectly we perform this lesson, the more shall we be entitled to find mercy. God will measure his mercy, and the rigour of his justice towards us, by our practice of this rule. Oh! happy virtue! which will make that trial, the thought of which was terrible to the Jeroms and Hilarions, joyful and easy to us; which will secure us on that day, when the pillars of heaven shall tremble. "Judgment without mercy shall be to those who have not shown mercy." James ii. 13. Let us not pervert the order which God has appointed, but judge ourselves, not others. Let us imitate those holy solitaries, at least in our hearts, who, being assembled to judge a criminal, all arose and went out weeping.

DISCOURSE XXV.

THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL.

"Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink." *John* vii. 37.

1. Is it not a most surprising thing to see Almighty God descend personally on earth, clothed with a human body like ours, that he might open to us the immense treasures of his heavenly riches, and bestow them in all abundance on all that would accept of them; and yet that men should be so negligent in running in to receive them? Did your prince make an offer to heap all his honours and treasures on every one that would come and ask for them, how eagerly would all run and strive to be the first to partake of his so generous bounty? But God, not content with this, adds the most pressing invitations and threats to compel us, as I may say, to accept of his divine graces, which he most plentifully offers us in his most holy sacraments. Though he be the eternal Wisdom, yet his delight is to be with the sons of men; and that he might always remain with, and unite himself, by his spiritual graces, more closely to our souls, he left us these sacraments as the most assured pledges of his divine love, and most urgently presses us to approach and taste of his sweetness; to partake of his infinite treasures and love. "He who is thirsty, and who will receive, let him drink of the water of life gratis." Apoc. xxii. 17. And again: "I will give to the thirsty, of the fountain of living water gratis." Apoc. xxi. 6. And by his prophet: "Come, all ye that thirst, to the waters; and ye that have no money, hasten, buy, and fill yourselves; come, buy without money, or any exchange, wine and milk," *i. e.* my heavenly graces. Isa. lv. 1. And our Redeemer himself, in the words of my text, went up to the temple, John vii. 37, on the great festival of Tabernacles, when all the Jews were obliged to meet there, and standing up cried out: "If any one be thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me," says the scripture, "streams of living water shall spring out and flow from his bowels. But this he said of the Holy Ghost" to be received after his resurrection by his holy sacraments, as the evangelist expounds it.

Let us not, dear Christians, be rebellious to the divine light; let us not reject such gracious offers, and shut our ears to the tender invitations of our God and Saviour; let us not refuse such heavenly favours, which our Redeemer procured for us at the expense of so many labours and pains, and of his most precious blood. To prevent our ever being so much our own enemies, a few reflections on so important a subject may be of great benefit. For this purpose my design is first, briefly to explain what a sacrament is; and in my second part to speak a word or two on the abuses of these sacred treasures of grace, too common among Christians. Let us first implore the intercession of the mother of grace and mercy. Ave Maria.

A sacrament of the new law is a visible sign of invisible grace, instituted by Christ for our justification. Let us, if you please, explain each word apart. It is a visible, a sensible sign; "for no society of men could ever be joined in any religion, whether true or false, unless tied together by the bond of external signs or sacraments." Cat. Trid. part. 2, n. 5,

Conc. Trid. Sess. 13, cap. 3; St. Aug. lib. cont. Faust. c. 11, p. 319. Thus the old law had a multitude of sacrifices, expiations, sacraments, and sensible ceremonies; for men are so addicted to their senses, that what we cannot perceive by them, what *e. g.* we neither see, nor touch, nor feel, seldom greatly affects us. Hence it was proper, that the divine Providence should institute some sensible sacraments, says St. Thomas, 3, part. c. 960. ut in Cat.; St. Bonav. centiloqu. 3, p. sect. 47. Christ was pleased to condescend so far to our weakness, that, though his graces are purely spiritual gifts, he vouchsafes to confer them on our souls by means of sensible signs. "Had we been incorporeal, God would have given us his graces in a purely spiritual manner," says St. Chrysost. Hom. 8, in Mat.; "but because our souls are joined to bodies, he conveys them by these sensible signs." Hence you see why all the sacraments have something sensible, which is called their matter; but for this to become a holy sign of the internal grace, it must be joined with a form of words instituted by Christ, and pronounced by the proper minister, whilst he applies the matter: for *e. g.* without this form, "I baptise," &c. water would not be determined to signify a cleansing of the soul from sin, and adorning it with sanctifying grace, but would be only a common washing. "Words must be pronounced over the material element to make a sacrament."[a] St. Aug. tract. 80, in Joan. "Take away this form of words," says St. Augustin, "and the water of baptism is no more than common water;" ib. tom. 3, part. 2, p. 703; "but in the sacrament it becomes the living instrument of grace." "Water would never have the power to cleanse the soul, but by virtue of the words." St. Aug. ibid. Have we not great reason to render immortal thanks to Almighty God, who, to conform himself to our weak capacities, is pleased to annex his graces to such sensible signs, that we might more easily be excited to receive them with devotion, and make ourselves partakers of them at pleasure?

But let us consider why they are called signs. They are signs, *first*, of Christ's passion, the merits of which they apply to our souls. "In Christ Jesus and in his Name we are baptized." Rom. vi. 3. *Secondly*, of our eternal future felicity: "It shall be unto him a fountain of living water unto life everlasting." John iv. 14. *Thirdly*, and chiefly, of the interior graces, which each sacrament actually confers. Thus, when ex. c. you see a person baptised, regard not what you see with the eyes of your body, but consider what you know by faith, and imagine you see with the eyes of your soul, at the same time that the water is poured on the body, the invisible hand of God cleansing the soul from all sin, and making it by his grace beautiful and acceptable in his sight, his adoptive son and heir to eternal glory. For the water, duly joined with the form, has truly the virtue to sanctify the soul. "The waters are impregnated with grace and a power of sanctification; the body is washed that the soul may be cleansed; the body is anointed that the soul may be consecrated:" Tertull. l. de baptis. c. 4. In confirmation, "the body is signed that the soul may be strengthened; the body receives the imposition of hands, that the soul may be enlightened by the divine Spirit:" Idem, l. de resurr. carnis, c. 8, p. 330. In the blessed Eucharist, "the flesh is nourished by the body and blood of Christ, that the soul may be filled with God, and fattened with his grace."

Hence it is clear, as the Council of Trent has defined, that all the sacra-

[a] Accedit verbum ad elementum & fit sacramentum.

ments must have been instituted by Christ our Redeemer and our God; for God alone can be the author of all grace, and consequently no other could annex an infallible promise of it to feeble signs, which of themselves bear no proportion to such an effect. Again, only Christ, as man personally joined to this God by the incarnation, could by suffering satisfy for our sins, and communicate to our souls by any sacraments the graces of so plentiful a redemption. Whence it is plain, that Christ alone, true God and true man, could be the author of the sacraments of the new law. The sacraments, or ceremonies, of the old law were a burden by reason of their multitude, and of themselves "weak and feeble." Gal. iv. 9. "They only promised, in a great measure, that grace which ours confer." St. Aug. contra Faust. l. 19, c. 8. But Christ instituted sacraments, which for excellence and virtue bear no proportion with those of the old law, and which are truly worthy of so great and plentiful a redemption; all of easy access, few in number, and yet adapted to all the necessities of the church, viz., the sacrament of Baptism, or regeneration, by which we are freed from the tyranny of sin, and re-born to God: (St. Thomas in Cat. Trid.) Confirmation to make us strong and perfect in grace: Eucharist, to be our spiritual food and nourishment; and, in case we should fall again, he left Penance as a plank after shipwreck: Extreme Unction to comfort and help us in our passage to eternity: Order, to provide his church with proper pastors; and that of Matrimony for its increase and propagation, and to be a help against the difficulties and dangers of that state. Nor has he left these to be had in one place only of the world, or at certain times only, or by great labour and expenses; but easily, in all places, at all times, whensoever we are willing to receive them. Were they to be procured only in one remote corner of the earth, or once in a hundred years, how should we esteem such great treasures? and ought we to regard them less, because God's bounty has been so munificent to us? But what seems above all to extol God's mercy in them is, that they depend not on the faith or devotion of the minister; though he be a sinner or a heretic, they nevertheless produce the graces in the receiver: nay, though they be unworthily received, they cease not to be sacraments. Christ was pleased to permit his adorable body and blood, his very divinity, and all the treasures of his heavenly graces, to pass through the hands of the greatest sinners, yet without being defiled himself, as the sun's beams pass undefiled through the most noisome bodies; and this that he might communicate himself to us, converse always with us, and be our protector, our physician, our all himself. "My beloved to me, and I to him." Have we not great reason to congratulate ourselves on our so happy circumstances, and to adore and praise God's infinite mercy to us, who has made us be born sons of this law of grace, and partakers of such immense heavenly treasures? The ancient patriarchs and prophets sighed earnestly after this; and no expressions can be more sublime than those by which the Holy Ghost by their mouths described the spiritual riches and magnificence of the new law, the Messiah's spiritual kingdom. They exulted in spirit to think on those happy days, and rejoiced beyond measure to foresee them by God's revelation. "Abraham saw and rejoiced." We live in this spiritual kingdom of Christ amidst so great blessings, and such powerful helps and sacraments. These are those times, of which Isaiah said so many years ago: "You shall draw water in joy from the fountains of the Saviour." Isa. xii. 3. Yet, (can we speak it without tears?) how little benefit do we reap from

so great favours! Do not we frequently turn these blessings into poison to our own destruction? and what a damnation do we thus prepare for ourselves? "How shall we escape, if we neglect such powerful means of salvation?" Heb. ii. 3. A reflection or two on this point shall form my second part.

Among all the disorders that reign among Christians, none is so general, so dangerous, so criminal, as the great abuse of the holy sacraments, which may be called the source of all that impiety we see among them. Our blessed Saviour wept over Jerusalem, because that chosen city of God had made no other use of his distinguishing favours than to reject and abuse them; "because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." Luc. xix. 44. And is there not more reason to deplore now the most horrid sacrileges and profanations of the sacraments daily committed by Christians? Our loving Redeemer instituted the sacraments as conduits, by means of which he communicates himself to us, and makes us partakers of his heavenly graces. This means divine wisdom invented that he might always remain with us, and intimately join himself to our souls: so that, though we do not see him suffer on Mount Calvary for us, nor can be bathed under his cross, yet by the holy sacraments we have our souls truly purified and washed by his precious blood applied to them. We honour the relics of saints, churches, altars, or whatever belongs to the divine worship; with what awe and reverence then ought we to look upon the holy sacraments, which are the lively instruments of God's graces, (Conc. Trid.) the vessels of the spiritual riches he has bestowed on his church, the sacred depositories of the price of our redemption, the adorable blood of Christ, the merits of which they actually communicate to our souls? "All of us who have been baptized in Christ Jesus, were baptized in his death." Rom. vi. 3. Did we see the Holy Ghost descend visibly in the sacraments, as he did on Christ when baptised in the Jordan; did we see such visible miraculous effects caused by them, as the descent of the Holy Ghost wrought usually by confirmation in the primitive church, we should be moved to regard them in a different manner from what we do. And have we no eyes but those of the body? Does not faith teach us far greater things concerning them? Yet, how do men impiously profane these most sacred tokens of love, and most adorable mysteries of religion! These horrid and common sacrileges the ministers of the sacraments daily deplore, prostrate at the foot of the altar; and every Christian, that has the least spark of the love of God, or zeal for his honour and our neighbour's good, ought to weep with tears of blood, to see the most holy things of the divine worship so sacrilegiously profaned by God's own chosen people; to see God so grievously injured in what he deserves the greatest homages for; and to see Christians, for whom they were instituted, turn these antidotes and preservatives into the mortal poison of their souls, to make the means of their salvation serve for their most grievous damnation, and to expose the precious blood of Christ and the merits of his sacred passion, to become the subject of the devil's triumph. You will ask me here, who are guilty of these common abuses? I answer in short, all those who neglect to approach them, and those who approach them without due dispositions.

First, I say, all who neglect frequently to receive the sacraments are guilty of a grievous and most dangerous crime and ingratitude. Of this we shall be easily convinced if we consider what we believe concerning them. The sacraments are the vessels of the divine grace, (Conc. Trid.,)

and necessary for all Christians, though not all for every one, or at all times; we believe they are the only food and nourishment of our souls, to preserve and maintain their spiritual life; the only remedies in all spiritual diseases, the only comfortatives in weaknesses; in a word, they only, when they can be procured, both give and maintain in us grace, the life of the soul: "for it is by them all true justice is begun in us, increased or perfected, and when lost repaired." Ib. Sess. 7. Can we then be so far our own enemies as to neglect so necessary a means for acquiring eternal happiness? It is an established law of the divine Providence, that the sacraments should be the ordinary means by which God conveys his graces into our souls. Do you then imagine, that God will break his established law, and work a miracle in favour of sinners, who through sloth and contempt refuse to make use of the means by which he offers his graces? Would it not be an extreme madness for a man to throw himself from the top of a precipice, in hopes that God, by a miracle against the ordinary course of nature, would protect him? Yet let me tell you, that their case is a more unpardonable presumption. To resist God's inspirations and graces is always the most ungenerous step of hardened sinners; for this forces God to draw back his liberal hand, and leave them to their own destruction. "Because I have stretched out my hand and you will not regard me, therefore you shall call upon me and I will not hear you. I will laugh at you in your destruction." What then shall we think of those who so outrageously contemn him in the very fountains of grace; but that such souls will be left defenceless to the fury of the enemy? "They shall surround thee, they shall straiten thee on every side; they shall level thee with the ground, and shall not leave one stone on another, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." Luc. xix. 43, 44. Should we out of wilful stubbornness refuse the gracious offers of a bountiful prince, would he not be justly offended, and afford us no more of his bounty or protection? God will doubtless remove from such ungrateful sinners his paternal care, leaving them abandoned to themselves. It is of them he has sworn: "Not one of those men shall taste of my supper." To avoid this terrible curse, let us be particularly careful to approach the sacraments, especially those of confession and communion, which we ought always to do at least once a month, as we value our salvation; and the other sacraments in their due times. But let it be with fervour and devotion; for the abuses are still far more grievous and more common of such as receive the sacraments without due dispositions. I say, far more dangerous, if possible, and far more grievous. Any sacrilege is of its own nature a crime so execrable, that nothing is more odious even among men. Other sins aim not so directly at the Divinity itself; but sacrilege immediately attacks the divine worship by a declared rebellion against God, and tramples on all that is most sacred. Now nothing in religion is so holy as the sacraments. Churches, sacred vessels, &c., are principally sacred, only because they are consecrated to the service of God and to the use of the sacraments. Yet to profane a church, or to break down an altar, all persons regard as a monstrous impiety; and a Christian guilty of such a crime is justly excommunicated and cut off from the number of the faithful, as being worse than an infidel, who if he profane these holy things, believes not that they belong to the true divine worship. King Balthassar had his destiny written by an invisible hand on the wall for daring to profane the vessels of the temple instituted for the sacrifices of the old law.

If God showed such exemplary punishments for these lesser sacrileges, what does he reserve for those who pollute his most holy sanctuary, his sanctuary of the new law? "A man transgressing the law of Moses, convicted by two or three witnesses, died without pity; how much more severe shall the punishment of him be who tramples on the Son of God, and pollutes the blood of the New Testament, by which he was sanctified, and insults the Spirit of grace?" Heb. x. 28, 29. We read in St. Cyprian, that many in his time, for having unworthily received the blessed Eucharist, were immediately seized and frightfully tormented by the devil, and sometimes killed on the spot, and so carried straight to hell, to deter others from such sacrilegious attempts. These terrible chastisements ought to be an example and terror to us. Those unhappy wretches might plead frailty, and that they sinned, hoping after to repent: but we seeing their exemplary punishment, have no excuse, and sin out of downright malice; and, though God does not now usually punish sacrileges in so sensible a manner, his vengeance is the more to be feared, the more occult it is. It is in punishment hereof that he delivers over so many thousands to a reprobate sense, to inveterate habits of swearing, gluttony, drunkenness, and other brutal sins, which St. Paul forbids a Christian even to name: hence he so often permits them to fall into a foolish presumption or despair; and it is a far greater punishment to live on in this manner, so as to heap up new treasures of wrath by new sins never repented for, than to be struck dead in sin. "It is better to die in sin than to live only to sin." St. Amb.

These two propositions I dare boldly to advance: *First*, that this neglect of the sacraments is the cause of all the disorders we see among Christians; for it is impossible they could make a good use of them, while they live as the greater part of them do. *Secondly*, that there can be no greater certain mark of reprobation than this. If a patient should either obstinately reject a sovereign and only cure of his distemper, letting it thus hourly gain head; or should take it, but receive no benefit from it, would not you despair of his recovery? And is not this the case of such Christians? What can they expect, but that the terrible curse of Christ be verified in them, for neglecting his gracious visits: "You will seek me, but you shall die in your sins." Let us then remember, that the sacraments are the healing balsams, the chief and only ordinary restorers and preservers of our spiritual life; that they cost our Redeemer the last drop of his precious blood. If we let one drop hereof fall to the ground, O what a terrible avenging justice will quickly overtake us! Approach then confidently to these fountains of grace, and receive the heavenly treasures here offered you; but approach with a spiritual thirst, with humility, fear and trembling; say with the Samaritan woman: "Lord, give me this water," John iv. 15, that you may deserve to receive those graces, which will be in your souls "a fountain of living water to bring you to eternal life," ib. v. 11; a happiness, &c.

DISCOURSE XXVI.

ON THE VIRTUE OF PENANCE.

1. PENANCE may be considered either as it is a virtue, or as it has been raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament of the new law. To understand it under the first character, it is defined by St. Thomas, 3 p. q. 85, a 2, and in the schools: "A virtue, by which a man bewails and labours to destroy his past sin." For it is a sorrow of the mind, and a detestation of sin committed, for the sake of God, with a resolution of appeasing him for the past, and of never offending him any more. It has therefore two parts, the one interior, which is the contrition or compunction of heart, consisting in the inward sorrow and detestation; the other exterior, which consists in satisfactory works, by which the sinner labours to chastise himself for sin, and to satisfy the divine justice, by revenging sin on the offender, his own guilty heart and flesh. These two parts are inseparable: both must concur, at least in some degree, to constitute this virtue; for though the interior be the most essential member, and, as it were, the soul of it, this cannot subsist without a firm will of practising the other part. Those who are for either the interior or the exterior alone, and without the other, embrace only a counterfeit, and a shadow, without having the virtue of penance itself.

2. Penance is to be reckoned amongst the moral virtues; whereas it is a good act, which has its peculiar object, and its special difficulty to overcome, by which it is distinguished from other virtues, and constitutes one by itself; for it alone is employed in removing and satisfying for sin. Also, it is criminal in a sinner not to grieve, and labour to satisfy for having sinned; or to grieve for it to excess by despair. It must, therefore, be a virtue to regulate and govern this grief within its just bounds, so as by it to labour to remove and destroy sin in the guilty soul.

It is an absurd heresy, condemned by the Catholic Church, to pretend, that the virtue of penance requires nothing but a mere change of life; though how can even this be without a sorrow for past sins? The holy scripture, in every part, both in the Old and New Testament, requires expressly in penance a real sorrow, and also works of satisfaction; for it joins with it groans, sighs, prayer, fasts, sackcloth and ashes. Whence all the fathers, being instructed in its school, give only this essential idea of it: "It is not enough for a sinner to change his manners and depart from sin, unless he satisfies God for what he has done, by the sorrow of repentance, by the groans of humiliation, and by the sacrifice of a contrite heart, alms also accompanying," as St. Augustin says, Serm. 351, ol. kom. 50. inter. 50, u. 12, t. 5, p. 1361.

3. Penance is an infused virtue and the gift of a particular grace. Though there may be a natural sorrow for sin, grounded on temporal motives, as on its temporal consequences, and natural baseness in the light of reason, which may help to draw the will from sin, yet this is not the true virtue of penance, which must be a sorrow for sin, conceived for God, produced by grace, grounded on supernatural motives proposed only by faith, such as the fear of hell, and the love of God. Hence this virtue is not a plant of our own growth, but infused into our hearts by the Holy

Ghost. Wherefore Jeremy prays thus for it: "Convert me, and I shall be converted; because thou art the Lord my God. For after thou hast converted me, I have done penance." Jer. xxxi. 18. It is given only through Jesus Christ, as being the precious fruit of his passion: Acts v. 31; xi. 18. This is the doctrine of the holy Church, and the Council of Trent pronounces anathema against those who shall say, that a man can repent as he ought for justification, without the succour of the Holy Ghost. Sess. 6, an. 3. This is also manifest from the very nature of this virtue; for the grace of justification being supernatural, the means conducing to it must be also supernatural, the means and the end being always necessarily in the same order. Therefore faith, hope, the love of God, and repentance, must be all supernatural virtues. Such then is the nobleness of this virtue, that only the blood of Christ could purchase the least degree of it; and God alone can bestow it.

4. God always offers us this grace, as he desires not the death of any sinner, but that he be converted and live. But it is to be obtained by earnest prayer, as repentance is excited only "by the grace of God touching a man's heart," according to the words of the Council of Trent, Sess. 6, c. 5. Faith, a fear of God's judgments, a firm hope in his mercy, and his divine love, are its ingredients, and the dispositions which prepare and raise a soul to it.

5. Every man, both the just and the sinner, is indispensably bound to make the practice of this virtue the continual exercise of his whole life. It is necessary for obtaining the remission of any sin whatsoever. Its perpetual exercise is necessary for past mortal sin, for daily venial sin, and because it is the indispensable preservative against sin.

No mortal sin, whether hidden or known, can ever be forgiven without an explicit repentance. Venial sin requires, at least, an implicit act of repentance, such as is contained in an act of the love of God, by which the will is drawn from all attachment to that venial sin, and is implicitly sorry for it; that is, is so disposed that it would excite an actual sorrow and contrition for it, if it occurred to the mind. This truth is so evident a principle of reason itself, that St. Augustin, l. de 2 Anim. c. 14, q. p. 90, says: "No country or man can be so barbarous as to say a person does not lie under a necessity of repenting, if he shall have sinned. For the law of nature dictates, that whoever has sinned should repent of his offence, be sorry for what he has done, and seek a remedy." He says again, ep. ad Vincent: "Do not imagine, that any one can pass from error to truth, or from any sin, whether great or small, to amendment, without repentance;" which words are related in the Canon Law, Dist. 1. de pœnit. c. 43. And the Council of Trent, speaking of those who have forfeited God's grace, says: "Penance was at all times absolutely necessary to such, to recover grace and justice." Sess. 14, c. 1. All sacrifices, sacraments, alms, or other the most holy actions, can never wash away any sin without penance. Hence God said to the Jews, who presumed on their sacrifices which they offered, without repenting of their sins: "Will holy flesh or victim take away from thee thy malices?" Jeremy xi. 15.

6. The exercise of the virtue of penance must be perpetual, during a man's whole life. Frequent acts of contrition are necessary not only for our daily venial, but also for fear of hidden mortal sins, which we may fall into without discovering them in ourselves. At least, we certainly fall into frequent venial offences; consequently we must perpetually have re-

course to the remedy, and never cease, by the continual fresh application of it, immediately to heal the wounds we receive in our perpetual skirmishes with our spiritual enemies. This is to be done by bewailing our infidelities; by repeated acts of compunction; by assiduously praying for the forgiveness of them, as our blessed Redeemer has taught us, by making this one of the petitions he has put in our mouths in his divine prayer; also by offering frequent sacrifices, alms, fasts, and performing other penitential works, in the sentiments of sincere compunction; particularly by frequent examens of our hearts and actions, to discover and correct immediately all even the least failings. Without this care, they are very soon multiplied and formed into habits, leading to the most fatal consequences, as drops of rain multiplied raise great floods, which sometimes overturn the strongest buildings. The sink in a ship must be often pumped out, or the water, entering only by single drops, will at length fill and sink the vessel. A most scrupulous attention to find out and amend our smallest faults, especially in our predominant passions, is absolutely necessary to stop their progress, and to enable us to maintain our ground in the service of God. This is, therefore, the constant employment of all saints during their whole lives. "This is the perpetual labour of the just in this life," says St. Gregory, Mor. l. 11. c. 21, "to discover, and, by weeping and correcting all faults, to amend themselves continually."

7. If a soul be conscious of having ever committed any one mortal sin, certainly she can never cease doing penance for it as long as she lives. She has repented of it; but is she sure, that her contrition and atonement were such as to have satisfied the divine justice, at least entirely, and to have blotted out all the remains of sin, and the punishment due to it? Ah! St. Bernard, that innocent dove of the church, was quite overwhelmed with dread and horror, as often as he called to mind the uncertainty of grace. Serm. 23. in Cant. St. Paul himself, that great apostle and incarnate seraph of divine love, trembled at the same reflection. How ought we then to fear? We, who know, that we have on many occasions provoked the anger of God, and deserved his eternal hatred. How terrifying a thought is it? I am certain that I have offended God, but am uncertain whether I have yet satisfied his infinite justice and obtained pardon. Ah! my soul, I will always labour to perfect my penance. "Be not without fear for sin, that is forgiven." Eccl. v. 5.

Even though a penitent had received an assurance of pardon, as St. Peter and St. Mary Magdalen did from the mouth of Christ himself, and David by the prophet Nathan, yet he ought, with them, to prolong his penance till death. Can a soul, that loves God, remember she has ever offended so great and good a Father, without grieving afresh for it? If her crime be remitted, this is owing only to the infinite and undeserved mercy of God, the remembrance of which ought the more to excite her tears for having been rebellious against such a God; for her impiety and ingratitude are not the less on account of his mercy. Their enormity appears but the greater, as God's goodness shines the more by this. A rebel, who was pardoned by his gracious king, and restored to all his dignities and possessions, could not but be thereby moved the more to regret his past treasons, as often as they returned to his mind. So must the true penitent continue his penance for his sin all his life; as his crime, even by the fullest pardon, can never be undone. It was committed; it cannot now be hindered. Being effaced

by pardon, it remains an eternal monument of God's mercy to the sinner indeed; but it is still true, that he had rebelled against his Creator. St. Mary Magdalen with all her tears could not undo her sins. That she had offended God is still eternally true. In seeing them blotted out, she admired, praised, and loved the more her infinitely merciful Creator; but even in this she read the characters of her past baseness, and was stirred up to fresh tears. This is the wound, which bleeds in all true penitents during their whole lives, and makes the sources of their tears never to dry up.

8. Holy David, though assured by God that his sin was forgiven him, yet lived a model to penitents until the end of the world, and, by the Psalms of repentance which he composed, furnished all, in every future age, with the most feeling sentiments and expressions of compunction, which were dictated to him, in his spirit of perfect penance, by the Holy Ghost himself, the true Master of the heart in this virtue. Nor content thus to pour forth his soul continually in penitential prayer, every night, instead of closing his eyes to sleep, he watered his bed with his tears; and they were so frequent and so abundant in the day, that he says they were to him as his food and drink. He laid aside his purple to clothe himself with hair and sackcloth, though by these humiliations, and by those penitential weeds, he exposed himself to be the scorn and table-talk of all his subjects, as he testifies. We must remember, that he was justified by the assurance of God himself upon his repentance immediately after his fall; yet such was his severe penitential life, such his spirit of compunction. A court, the affairs of a kingdom, company, pleasures, nothing was able to divert his mind from his sin. He had offended God, and accordingly could never moderate or put an end to his sorrow but with his life. "My grief," says he ever after, "is always in my sight." Ps. xxxvii. 18. "My sin is always against me." Ps. l. 4. How contrary is the practice of those superficial penitents, who, as soon as they are returned from confession, seem to forget that they had sinned! Must not their repentance have been very imperfect, their idea of an offence of God very weak?

St. Mary Magdalen heard from the Saviour of the world, that her sins were forgiven her, because she loved much. Yet, because she loved truly, she was not able to set bounds to her penance, till death finished it. With reason does St. Gregory the Great say of her, Hom. 33, in Evang.: "When I think of the penance of a Mary Magdalen, I am moved to weep rather than speak any thing of it. For whose, even strong breast, do not the tears of that sinner move to sentiments of compunction? She considered what she had done, and therefore would not set any bounds to what she was to do."

St. Peter not only was pardoned, but raised by Christ to the highest spiritual dignities and honours, and vested with the greatest graces and supernatural gifts; yet neither the most ample and assured patent of full pardon, nor length of time, nor God's singular favours, nor the conversion of nations, the solicitude of all churches, nor his perpetual labours, fatigues, and sufferings for Christ, were ever able to make him forget his offence, or interrupt his penitential tears. To his last hour, he never heard the cock crow without weeping bitterly at the remembrance of his sin. We cannot, without astonishment, read in the lives of many holy solitaries and others, the long and most severe penances to which they condemned themselves, and often for the slightest venial stains of youth, or only apprehen-

sions of a greater offence: an Eusebius living always chained and bowed down to the ground, to punish himself for a short distraction in listening to the word of God: an Ephrem continually weeping for a mere childish trick of play in pursuing a cow, till it fell down a precipice: a Macarius, living a prodigy of austerities, chiefly lamenting a theft of two or three figs, when a child. Ah! if we do not imitate perfectly these patterns of true penance, at least we cannot but follow them at a distance, remembering always our past sins in the bitterness of our souls, praying daily to be perfectly cleansed from them, and adding perpetually works of satisfaction to expiate them.

9. Oh! my soul, what can I look upon in the whole world that does not refresh the remembrance of my sins, and oblige me to melt into tears? Can I look up to heaven, and not weep at the sight of that glorious kingdom, which I basely renounced, at the remembrance of that gracious Father and Lord of Majesty whom I rebelled against, and of those blessed spirits whose eyes I turned from me by offending their God? Can I contemplate the light, and not bewail my blindness? Can I observe the regular movements of the stars, and the obedience of all creatures to their Creator's laws, and not weep for my disorders and transgressions? Can I cast my eyes on the earth, and not weep to see what I have defiled, and drawn down God's curses upon my sins? The world puts me in mind how I have abused it. In every thing I see what I have perverted, or what I ought to renounce in penance and am unworthy of. The royal prophet invites even dragons, reptiles, and scorpions to praise God: the sinner alone is excluded, as St. Chrysostom observes, (Serm. de ordinat. sua.) "Can I see any creatures and not summon them to the praises of God? Struck at the remembrance of my base unworthiness and exclusion, I sit down in confusion and bitter tears, desiring to join in this great office, but remembering that his praises in the mouth of a sinner are an abomination to him, who says to such: 'Why dost thou repeat my words, and take my testament in thy mouth, so polluted and defiled?'

"So I only dared to do it at a distance, and below the basest insects, and no other ways than by sentiments of penance, hope in his mercy, and love of goodness, which I am unworthy to name, after having so wretchedly abused it.

"Remembering always my mispent life, I cry out: Such was my life; was this to live, my God? St. Aug. (Conf. l. 3, c. 2.) It shall be my employ to bewail and make amends for it; I will draw from all objects salutary rivers of tears and bitter regret. Ah! I have often wept for passions, often for the world: have I no tears for God? Tears are no where else so just; no where else profitable. Here they are the necessary, the saving tribute of repentance. On all other occasions they are to be checked and moderated; but here they ought to be indulged. Why do I not water with these my bed, chamber, table, garden, and all places wherever I go? Why do I not interrupt by them my sleep, my studies, my labours, and my occupations, and make all creatures witnesses of them? Every thing I can see or think of is a bitter reproach of my guilt to my heart. God I have offended; the angels I have grieved; the church I have scandalized; the devils I have furnished triumphs of malice to; the heavens I have shut against me; hell is the place I have deserved, and its fiends ought in justice to be my horrible company; all creatures ought to raise their voice, and arm themselves against

me. Why do not I hide my face in confusion before every thing, only crying for mercy?" Thus David lived after his sin, as St. Ambrose elegantly observes.[a] Apol. c. 19.

10. Penance is likewise necessary, as it is the most indispensable and most powerful preservative against all sin. This virtue alone makes the soul always fearful and watchful, and nourishes a constant hatred and dread of all sin and the occasions of it. Without its continual pruning care, secret passions are easily engendered, and in a short time make great havoc in a heart. Hence, the most innocent are obliged, with St. John the Baptist, to live in the continual practice of this virtue of penance, and we see that the greatest saints, and those whose innocence was the most remarkable, all led most penitential lives. The greater their horror of sin was, the greater was their fear of the least shadow of it in themselves, and their fervour in the use of this most sovereign antidote against it.

11. All men are also bound to lead penitential lives, by an express positive command of God frequently inculcated by him. Although original sin be entirely remitted by baptism, both as to the guilt and as to the whole punishment due to it; whence this proposition was condemned by Pope Alexander VIII. (No. 19, Anno Dom. 1690): "A man ought to do penance his whole life for original sin;" yet, Almighty God pronounced this sentence on man, in punishment of that disobedience, that he should forfeit the happy state in which he was created in original justice, and should live in conflicts and labour for his trial and exercise of patience. He has therefore imposed a general penance on all the children of Adam, commanding them to labour: "Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow." Gen. iii. 19. No man is here excepted. Kings, great ones, the rich, the weak, the poor, sick and healthy, old and young, all are sentenced to apply themselves in a laborious manner. The king, for example, to the government of his dominions, and this by a personal service and attention to it, which is a great slavery; the gentleman to the care of his family and estate; and all to the management of their affairs. If small intervals of necessary relaxation be allowed in all states, nevertheless those, who spend the chief part of their time in superfluous dressing, sloth, circles of pleasures and pastimes, and visits not for motives of duty and charity, or the like, are certainly very far from this spirit and practice of a laborious penance, so necessary to a virtuous life, and so severely enjoined by God to all men. Another part of the general penance laid by God on all men is, that they suffer in patience all the miseries, which this life is subjected to in punishment of sin; our banishment from heaven, sicknesses, crosses, the painful struggles against the passions, resistance of temptations, and lastly, death, to which we all stand condemned as criminals before the divine justice; and which we ought daily to accept in spirit, and offer to God in the dispositions of resignation and satisfaction.

12. This virtue of penance is more particularly enjoined us in the holy scriptures, and especially by Christ in the new law. We may, in some sense, reduce this to one lesson of penance. All the instructions of the

[a] His own fault ever occurs to his mind: whatever might be said or read he applies to himself: whatever he might hear, he imagined himself reproached with his guilt. If he eat, if he think, if he pray, his own fall is always before his eyes: every moment it strikes and afflicts his breast, and never suffers him to be at ease or to forget it." St. Ambrose, Apol. 1, David, c. 19. "He mourned and wept prostrate on the ground; he fasted; he prayed; publishing his grief to all after ages, he transmitted the testimony of his confession to the latest posterity." Ib. c. 2.

gospel and prophets, and of all God's ministers in all ages; the exhortations of the prophets; all God's promises, threats, and pressing invitations to men, by their mouths, tend only to call men to this. The great precursor of the world's Redeemer, who came to prepare men to receive him, was only a voice summoning all to repent, or a trumpet sounding this precept in their ears: "Bring forth fruit worthy of penance." Matt. iii. 8. His very penitential works, the frightful wilderness, in which he spent his days, his austere life and example, announced to the world, in a still more pathetic manner than his words, that he was sent by God only as the great Doctor of penance. Christ himself opened his divine ministry with this same lesson. "Jesus began to preach and to say: Do penance; for the kingdom of God is at hand;" Mat. iv. 17; and all his preachings and instructions during his whole mission are epitomized in this: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 3.

The apostles travelled over the world to announce to all men this same precept of penance, together with faith in Christ. They cried out through all kingdoms, towns, and villages, wherever they passed, as the great heralds of heaven: "God now declareth unto men, that all should, every where, do penance." Acts xvii. 30. Observe how universal the terms are; "all men," without any exception, and wheresoever they lived, whatsoever was their profession, and whatsoever the state of their souls. This same great errand, upon which God sent Jonas to the Ninevites, all his prophets to the Jews, and his apostles to the whole earth, is still what he never ceases to publish by his ministers, who are equally the ambassadors of the Most High God. This same voice, which echoed, by the Baptist's trumpet, on the banks of the Jordan, and converted so many Jews, daily sounds in our ears from the same authority and summons. Wo to us, if we are deaf to it! Such a hardness of heart will tend to our most grievous punishment far more than it did to the world in the preaching of Noe before the flood, to the Sodomites in the time of Lot, and to the impenitent Jews in the time of Jeremy, and in that of the Baptist.

13. When then does this virtue of penance oblige me? During the whole course of my life. By repenting once, I must not think I have done with this exercise. This is a debt I must always continue paying till death. Thus I shall acquit myself of this obligation, and shall deserve to find mercy, when I shall have persevered suing for it to the end of my course. Without this constancy I shall be in danger of forfeiting again the advantages of the grace received in my conversion. They were conferred upon me, on the condition that I should ever remember myself a penitent, and always live in the spirit and practice of this virtue. This the very dispositions of sincere penitence, my own frailty, danger, and daily venial sins oblige me to. This the law of God enjoins me. This is the particular precept of Christ to all his followers. To encourage me to it, he, who was innocence and sanctity itself, did not disdain to become my model. He was, for my example, and to appease the justice of his Father offended by my sins, during the whole course of his mortality, a God penitent, wholly occupied in expiating my crimes. I am to be a penitent; for to be a follower of Christ, and to be a penitent, is one and the same thing. A Christian is well defined by Tertullian: "One born to penance."[a]

A particular act of the virtue of penance is of precept: *First*, in the

[a] Animal ad pœnitentiam natum.

article of death. *Secondly*, when any violent temptation urges, which cannot be overcome without this remedy. *Thirdly*, after one is fallen into mortal sin, so that it be not considerably deferred. *Fourthly*, whenever a person approaches the sacraments of penance, or one, after the age of discretion, that of baptism. It is also a part of the best preparation to all the other sacraments, especially Extreme Unction, and necessary before any of them after mortal sin, or a reasonable doubt of its guilt. *Lastly*, it is of precept, that acts of it be repeated from time to time. All truly serious Christians will be careful to perform an act of it daily in their evening examen; when they assist at the great propitiatory sacrifice of the Mass; when they perform their sacramental penance enjoined them in confession; when they repeat the fifth petition of our Lord's prayer, the excellent penitential aspirations of the psalms, or other devotions; under crosses and sufferings, which we ought to accept and offer to God in a spirit of penance. Proper occasions of it occur likewise in almost every action of life.

A delay of repentance after mortal sin for any considerable time, and, above all other crimes, final impenitence, are grievous sins against this virtue, as well as against the charity, which a man owes both to God and to his own soul. It is to be expressly confessed, if the sinner made an explicit act of this delay, for how long, and how often he reiterated such an act: also how long the repentance was actually put off.

14. Having considered the necessity of the holy virtue of penance, we are next to admire its efficacy and dignity. To understand which we must reflect how extraordinary a mercy the pardon of any sin is. It is in this sense the greatest of all graces, that it is bestowed on one the most unworthy of all graces; on one who is actually an enemy of God, an object of his holy hatred and abomination, and in a state incapable of performing the least action deserving, I say, so great a favour, but not even the lowest disposition towards it. So immense is the heavy guilt and debt of sin, that all the endeavours of all creatures possible could never satisfy or make a reparation for it; nothing less than the infinite price of the blood and sufferings of a God could do it. All sacrifices, prayers, austerities, and sufferings of creatures would be insufficient. "It is impossible that, with the blood of oxen and goats, sins should be taken away." Heb. x. 4. A God become man died on an ignominious and cruel cross, to procure to holy penance this most wonderful virtue. This was the great fruit of his sacred incarnation and death. All he did and suffered was to expiate and destroy sin, and reconcile sinners to his eternal Father. And holy penance is that virtue, that extraordinary means, which has received from his bloody sacrifice the power of so great and so happy an effect. By penance, exalted by its merits, and containing its infinite propitiation, the sinner is able to restore to God the honour, of which he had robbed him by sin, to repair the injury he had committed against him, recover his grace, and shut the gates of hell. Can we ever cease one moment extolling the infinite mercy of God, of which this is the rich depository? Why do not all sinners hasten to so powerful and precious a source of salvation?

15. Such is its efficacy, that there can be no sin, of ever so black a dye, though it were to unite in itself the malice of all sins possible to be committed by men and devils, nay, nor any number of such sins, which it is not able to blot out in a moment. Judas, in betraying his divine Master,

with the most perfect knowledge, and after having received from him the highest graces and favours, and then closing this crime with despair, committed certainly the greatest of sins; yet had he but cried out once in his heart, in true repentance, for pardon, the very same instant his crimes would have been all blotted out.

The sacred death of Christ being a superabundant propitiation for all sins, and penance being the instrument of its merits, the power of this virtue must be as extended as is the efficacy of Christ's blood, which is infinite, and a satisfaction infinitely surpassing all sins possible. Nor does fire consume so rapidly a dry thread of flax, as true penance blots out the most enormous and most numerous offences. "If your sins should be as crimson, says Almighty God, they shall be whitened as snow; and if they are red as the deepest scarlet, they shall be made white as wool." Isa. i. 18. "If the impious man shall have done penance from all his sins, which he has done—he shall live and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities." Ezek. xviii. 21, 22. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just. And he is the propitiation for our sins." 1 John ii. 1, 2.

David had fallen into the heinous sins of adultery and a most treacherous murder; he had judged one who was far from equalling him in his crime, to be "a son of death;" yet he had no sooner spoken, in a true compunction of heart, those few words: "I have sinned to the Lord," than the prophet Nathan, by God's command and in his name, said to him: "The Lord also has taken away thy sin." 2 Kings xii. 13. Manasses, after a reign defiled by idolatry and all manner of crimes and scandals, was carried prisoner to Babylon. There "repenting and humbling himself greatly before the God of his fathers," he found immediate mercy and relief from the Lord, and was restored also to his temporal kingdom. 2 Par. xxiii. 12, 13. The good thief received faith in Christ, and the extraordinary grace of perfect repentance at his last breath only, and he deserved by it to be the first chosen to accompany Christ to heaven; becoming a standing example of the efficacy of holy penance to all ages to come. Adam and Eve, the first of sinners amongst men, were also the first penitents, being by this plank raised from their sin. Wisdom x. 1. If they entailed sin upon their posterity, they set also an example of repentance, and showed its efficacy to us who, notwithstanding their fall, against the Tatianite heretics, with the fathers and the Roman martyrology, honour them among the saints.

16. Penance not only blots out all sin, but also restores to a soul sanctifying grace, with all its rich attendants. This inestimable treasure was the most precious of God's gifts when bestowed on innocence, as it exalted creatures to a dignity, honour, glory, and advantages incomprehensible and eternal, the very consideration of which fills us with astonishment and veneration. How great and how good is God, to frame creatures to such incomprehensible blessings! But if the bestowing of this grace in a state of innocence be so wonderful, how infinitely more so is it in a state of sin? Happy penance does this. It not only cleanses a soul which lay buried in filth, and was an obscure abominable monster, a fiend of hell, a slave of the devil; but it moreover makes her most beautiful before God, clothes her with his rich and glorious ornaments, invests her with a title to the kingdom of heaven, makes her a child of God, his spouse and temple, the object of his most holy delight, and the sister and companion of the angels.

O glorious change! O astonishing effect of holy penance! The heavens rejoice at it, and the angels sing triumphant praises to God; a day of solemn triumph is celebrated by the whole court of heaven: all creatures, which wept bitterly for this soul's fall, now rejoice exceedingly at her revival. Above all, the good Shepherd, our merciful Redeemer, who had long sought with the most earnest solicitude and love this lost sheep, and has brought it home on his shoulders, in transports invites all to share in his joy, saying: Rejoice ye all with me, for I have found again the sheep that was astray. For a sinner converted gives a greater joy, in some sense, than one always just; as a general testifies a more sensible affection for a soldier who had been a coward, but now fights valiantly, than for one who was always courageous, as St. Anselm says, or rather Hervæus, in Mat. xviii. Not but that the just is ordinarily more holy and more agreeable to God; but the conversion of a sinner may be called a most sensible joy, as our Saviour himself calls it a greater joy to heaven than there is over ninety-nine just: nay, so great may be the fervour of repentance, as in a moment to make a sinner an eminent saint, and surpassing the most innocent. To what an extraordinary degree of sanctity, and of God's favour, did it not raise St. Magdalen? To what extraordinary graces, what spiritual dignities did not Christ exalt St. Peter after his repentance? These examples show us how perfectly Almighty God forgets the sincere penitent's sins; never reproaches former guilt, nor retains any reserve on its account, any remembrance of it; as he says by his prophet: "And his iniquities shall be no more remembered." Ezech. xviii.

Another privilege of penance is the revival of all the merits of the good works of the whole life past which were lost by mortal sin. They were not annulled or destroyed by it; but only impeded to be acceptable to God. The impediment of their acceptance being removed, they recover their former virtue. Of which God says by Joel, ii. 25: "I will restore to you the years which the locust and fly have eaten." Which St. Jerom and the Gloss explain of this revival of lost merits by penance.

DISCOURSE XXVII.

ON INTERIOR PENANCE.

1. PENANCE consists of two parts, as has been said; but the interior or contrition of the heart, is its essence and its soul. This appears from the very name and nature of repentance, as well as from God's word, and the unanimous sense of all men. According to the etymology of the name, a conversion signifies an entire change by which a thing ceases to be what it was, and becomes what it was not before. So that the conversion of a sinner is a total transformation or reformation of his heart, which makes such a change in his soul, that the Scripture calls him a new man and a new creature. God destroys his old heart and gives him a new one. "I will take from you a heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh;" Ezech. xxvi. 38; that is, a heart filled with sentiments of compunction, and with new thoughts, affections, desires, and pursuits, quite contrary to the former. There is a great deal of difference between changing the place of one's

body and changing one's heart. A man changes the place of his body when he goes into another country; but he changes his heart who changes the affections of it. If he loves other things, and hates sovereignly what he loved before, his heart is no more what it was. St. Ambrose (l. 2, de pœnit. p. 477, ed. Ben.) illustrates this by the example of a certain young man who, forsaking his lewd life, travels abroad. On his being returned home and meeting his old concubine, she, surprised to see him take no notice of her, said: Do you not know me? I am such a one; to which he answered: But I am no more such a one; for I am become another man. The heart of sin must be destroyed, and the heart of grace substituted in its room.

2. The modish converts of these days flatter themselves that they are true penitents, because of some change in their exterior, and in appearance; but these, whatsoever they may seem in the eyes of men, are no better than dissemblers and counterfeits in the sight of God. For penance is essentially, not a mere interruption or simple disgust of sin, or an empty displeasure at it; but a sincere hatred and sorrow which is only the work of the heart. Whence God says: "Make to yourselves a new heart." Ezech. xviii. 31. "Rend your hearts and not your garments." Joel ii. 13.

What is sin? It is a free choice and preference of the creature to God. This is formed by the will, by the heart: it is a voluntary disorder of its affections. It is then in this same heart that sin is to be destroyed. The heart alone consents to it. "He fornicated in his heart," says our blessed Saviour. Matt. v. 28. "Out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders," &c. Mat. xv. 19. It is the criminal which is to satisfy; this seat, this author of sin, is to be punished. This same heart, which offended, must undo its crime, and make the amends. It must offer itself the victim.

The flesh is chastised by fasting; the estate is retrenched by alms; but sin is destroyed only by contrition. God has no regard to other satisfactions and sacrifices without this. The Jews pretended to be converted, when they fasted and humbled themselves as they said; and yet complained that God did not look upon them. He told them by his prophet, that notwithstanding this outward appearance, they were far from being converted, because the change did not reach their hearts, in which they still cherished their own wills and criminal affections. Isa. lviii. 3. In like manner many Christians fancy themselves converted if they fast, give alms, pray, confess their sins, and perform the penance enjoined them; whereas they see not that their hearts remain the same as ever.

But God is not to be deceived by hypocrisy and show. Why then do we deceive ourselves, as if he regarded the outward appearance? Though we give all our substance to the poor, and kill our bodies with fasting, this will never appease God, if our hearts are not converted to him by charity, as the apostle assures us. Whatever exterior practices we perform, with whatever diligence we confess our sins, if our heart has not yet done its part we can never enter the list of true penitents.

3. How many do we see, when they approach the sacrament of penance, extremely scrupulous in their examens, and nice in their confessions; yet not equally solicitous to bring a true contrition? Hence true penitents are so rare. This made St. Ambrose say: (l. 2, de pœnit. c. 10,) "I have more easily found him who shall have preserved his innocence unspotted, than he who after a fall shall have done worthy penance." This he said in

an age abounding with illustrious patterns of penance, as the same saint witnesses. It is the want of a sincere contrition, that fills the church with false penitents, and hell with souls. If striking the breast, or confessing, was sufficient for pardon, few Christians would be lost; but contrition and a change of heart is what constitutes a true penitent. This alone can never fail, and will supply all deficiencies in the other conditions, even confession and satisfaction, if the opportunity of them be wanting; but it can be supplied by nothing. Without it all the austerities and prayers that may be practised can never prevail: without it all jubilees and indulgences are fruitless, and absolutions and sacraments only crying sacrileges. From its defect proceeds the great wreck of Christian souls; for as few escape by a plank in a shipwreck, so few save themselves after sin by sincere penance or hearty contrition.

4. "Contrition is a sorrow of mind, and a detestation of sin committed, with a resolution of sinning no more." It contains three acts, which yet may be comprised in one word, in which the heart grieves for sin committed, with a detestation of it and of all sin, and a firm purpose of avoiding it for the time to come, with all its immediate occasions. The first part of it is a true sorrow of the heart, consequently not consisting merely in tears, which are often found to lie, as St. Bernard says; not in looks; not in a simple disgust of sin or displeasure at it. The second part is a detestation, that is, an abhorrence and abomination of all sin. This differs from a bare sorrow; for the damned grieve for sin without a detestation of it; and those who have never sinned, as the blessed Virgin, have an abhorrence of it, without a sorrow for having committed it: as also the blessed in heaven have, whose happy state makes them incapable of any grief. The definition adds: this sorrow is to be for sin; *i. e.* because it is an offence of God; consequently conceived through the love of him.

5. A third act implied in contrition is, a firm purpose of never more offending God by any mortal sin, or voluntary immediate occasion. When the sorrow for sin is named in repentance, this purpose of amendment for the future is generally added; as Isa. i. 16: "Cease to do ill, and learn to do well." And this act is added in the definition of penance by the general councils, fathers, and schoolmen, with St. Thomas. Whence many are of opinion that in an act of contrition, preparatory to the sacrament, it is essential that this purpose for the future be made explicitly: and all agree, that this is absolutely to be done in practice, lest the sacrament should be null without it. The sorrow for the past regards only sins actually committed; but this purpose for the future must be a general one of avoiding all mortal sin and all immediate occasions; and it must be expressly extended to all habitual sins and their occasions, as it is a necessary means for the avoiding of them. It is not sufficient if it be only light, wavering, and inconstant: it must be firm, and as to more dangerous sins, must be extended to a consideration of the necessary and proper means for avoiding them; such as prayer for that end, mortification, or other remedies, more or less in particular, according as the penitent's circumstances may require. Without this care, it is impossible that a person's resolution can be thoroughly sincere and made in earnest. Can one seriously fear a grievous evil of which he is in great danger, who neglects to provide the means to secure himself? The penitent must not content himself here with general resolutions, which seldom have any

effect, being forgotten in the occasions. He must then descend into a detail of the proper means, at least as to certain chief points; and this with so much care, that he may be stronger against the like dangers for the future than if he had never received any wound: as a bone which has been put out of joint, will be set by a careful surgeon so as to be made even stronger than the rest. He is not, indeed, to imagine himself more secure by his resolutions. Such a presumption would expose him to certain ruin. It is chiefly by being more fearful, diffident in himself, and solicitous in putting his resolutions in execution with great fidelity, that he will become thus stronger. "I have sworn and decreed to keep the judgments of thy justice." Ps. cxviii.

6. This resolution must be formed with a liberal and great heart; for the penitent will receive the graces of support in proportion to its fervour. For this he must make an entire offering of himself to God, to do and suffer all things in his cause, rather than to ever again offend him. He must, in the greatest dispositions of soul possible to raise himself to, cry out with St. Paul in his conversion, without any exception or reserve of himself: "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. That is to say, Command, O Lord what thou pleasest. Must I separate from friends, country, and estate? My heart is ready, if thy will command it. Must I endure hunger, cold, fatigues, poverty, persecutions, chains, stripes, and death? My heart is ready. The sequel of that apostle's whole life demonstrates, how sincere and how effectual this offering of himself was. Oh! had he many imitators of the fervour of his resolution, what happy penitents should we behold? How earnest, by penitential lives, to satisfy the divine justice? How solicitous in the practice of all means that can be expedient to secure themselves from relapses? How fervent to advance in virtue, and how laborious to propagate God's kingdom, and promote his honour? Alas! Christians often imagine their resolutions the best in the world whilst they find their hearts warmed with any good sentiments; yet these soon vanish like smoke, and the pretended penitents return to the vomit. Could such purposes have been perfect which so easily are forgotten? Can they who refuse to make use of the means, be thought to desire the ends those means are ordained for? Or, could they practise those means, and not be strengthened by them? They indeed do not always maintain a man to the end, and may be impaired by degrees in those who fall from their fervour; nay, some fear of a fall by a man's own frailty is not absolutely incompatible with a sincere purpose of never relapsing; but every sudden resolution, every good spirit is not to be looked upon as perfect, or sufficient for a sincere conversion, especially of great sinners. In many it is false, like that of Jeroboam, who acknowledged his crime, but after this did not return from his wicked way. 3 Kings.

In ordinary confessions of venial sins this resolution must be expressly made, viz., of avoiding all mortal sin whatsoever. It ought likewise to comprehend that of avoiding any direct consent to a venial sin, and of watching with the greatest diligence against all venial sins, even of surprize, as St. Thomas admonishes, 3 p. q. 87, a. 1, ad. 1.

7. The essential conditions of contrition are these four: that it be interior, supernatural, sovereign, and universal. It must be first *interior*. and moved by the repentance of the heart: "Thou shalt return to the Lord in thy whole heart; He will have mercy on thee." Deut. xxx. 1.

"You shall seek me, and shall find me when you shall seek me in your whole heart." Jer. xxix. 13. "Thou shalt have mercy as thou shalt see his heart, because thou alone knowest the heart of all the sons of men." 2 Kings viii. 38.

A second condition is, that it be *supernatural*. A natural attrition, or a sorrow for sin conceived through temporal or natural motives, or without the motion of grace, no ways belongs to the virtue of penance. See St. Aug. in Ps. 77, n. 20, t. 4, p. 828. A disposition to grace and glory, as penance is in a most noble manner, must bear a proportion with its end, and be in the same order. Contrition must therefore be excited by motives propounded by faith, and must be elicited by a motion of divine grace. "No man can come to me, unless my Father draw him." John vi. 44. "The Lord will give bounty, and our earth shall give its fruit." Ps. lxxxiv. 13. The bounty of his grace must visit our dry heart, before it can produce its fruit.

8. A third condition of contrition is, that it be *sovereign*, or above all things. As God is the sovereign good, and to be loved with a love of preference above all things; so sin, his contrary, and the sovereign evil, is to be detested and hated above all things. God alone is able to abhor this monster, as it deserves; and, as God, he pursues it with all the hatred of a God, with an infinite hatred. We are bound to detest and grieve for it in our souls above all other evils possible, so as to be truly so disposed as to be willing rather, were the case to happen, to undergo all manner of losses, tortures, and evils, than ever to consent to any mortal sin. "Thou shall find him, if thou shalt seek him with thy whole heart, and with all the tribulation of thy soul." Deut. iv. 29. "Who will separate us from the charity of Christ?" &c. Rom. viii. 35.

It is not necessary, that this sorrow for sin be the most sensible; for sensible objects more easily affect the sensitive part of the soul than those which are spiritual, though she prefer the latter. We are to distinguish the motion of the will from that of the sensitive appetite. A mother may be more sensibly afflicted at the loss of a babe than at that of a son already grown up, though she would prefer the latter's life. Such indeed is the sympathy between the two faculties of the mind, that the movements of the will usually affect, at least in some degree, the sensitive faculty also, though this is not always so. Nor is a penitent, on that account alone, to be discouraged as if he wanted contrition; though he ought to make use of it as a means to humble himself, and redouble his fervour.

9. An imperfect sorrow for sin is called "attrition;" that which is more perfect, "contrition." The contrition of a hard thing, as of a stone, signifies the entire breaking and shattering of it into dust; "attrition," only the outward bruising of it. These words are applied metaphorically to the heart-broken by perfect or imperfect repentance.

Attrition may be taken for any imperfect degree of penance. Its most common acceptation with writers of our present age is, to signify a supernatural sorrow for sin, on the motives of a fear of hell, of the baseness of sin, or the loss of heaven. To fear hell more than sin, so as to be disposed rather to sin than fall into hell (were the case possible,) is a grievous sin; though it is hard to say a fear is such, unless the comparison be expressly made in the will. But to hate sin for the fear of hell absolutely, is good and profitable. Certainly it is conformable to reason and virtue to fear extreme torments: and it is a wholesome effect of this fear

to make a soul detest sin as the cause of such torments. Nor does such an act of detestation of sin any ways imply a design of sinning, if there were no hell. Whence, such a fear of sin is good, a gift of God, and an impulse of the Holy Ghost, as the Council of Trent declares, Sess. 14, c. 4, against Luther; and Clement XI., against Quesnel. God threatens sinners with his punishments, only to inspire them with this wholesome fear, as he expressly declares, Exod. xx. 20, and in many other places. And such a fear is ascribed frequently in holy writ to his grace, and prayed for by the saints. This attrition, therefore, is the commencement of true repentance, as in the case of the Ninevites; it withdraws the heart from actually cleaving to sin, and disposes it to be moved to a more perfect hatred of sin by the nobler considerations of divine love. Whether it be possible, out of this motive, to detest sin with a sovereign hatred and above all things, as some think and many deny, is no ways material to justify this article of our faith. It suffices that it is a wholesome imperfect sorrow for that evil, grounded on good and just motives, and leads most powerfully to more perfect dispositions.

I acknowledge and praise thy infinite goodness and mercy, O Lord, in vouchsafing to break and hem in my stubborn interested heart with saving fear, at a time when you saw it obstinately insensible to all motives of your most amiable sweetness and infinite love. I embrace this powerful means to begin the great work of converting my heart to you. How many glorious saints, saved by penance, confess with St. Augustin, that they are indebted to this holy fear for the first motives of their happy and triumphant conversions, and the first graces, which laid the foundation and were the steps to the ladder of perfection, which they afterwards mounted so high, till it united them to you their God in bliss? Shall I neglect this first means towards a perfect conversion?

10. There is also an imperfect sorrow for sin, grounded on an inferior love of God, as he is good to us, and the happiness, which we fear to lose, exceedingly great. This is a motive higher than the fear of hell, but still the characteristic of a mercenary, not that of a son, nor reaching to the dignity of pure disinterested love of God for his own sake. It indeed disposes a soul to be easily kindled by its chaste flames. For, by considering God's unspeakable goodness to her, and the bliss of his possession, and indulging her affections in the love of that mercy and happiness, and in grieving for having basely slighted and forfeited it, she will begin also to be inflamed with the love of his incomparable goodness in himself. Some great philosophers and divines[a] have thought, that the affections of these different motives of love are inseparable in practice, and that it is impossible to love God truly as good to us, without also loving him as good in himself, and purely for his own sake. Though the general opinion holds this pure love of God, if in a degree above all things, (and under that degree it cannot be styled a love of God) to be really separable from the act of loving him as our good, yet all must agree this easily leads to that, and disposes a soul to that perfect disposition of true charity.

Perfect penance is only that, which is grounded upon this pure motive of the perfect love of God above all things. This, in a fervent degree, certainly justifies a sinner on the spot, and before he receives the sacrament of penance in the new law, as it did before the law of grace; witness

David, and innumerable other scripture penitents. "Much is forgiven her, because she loved much." Luke vii. 47. "Every one who loves is born of God." 1 John. iv. 7. "Do this, and thou shalt live." Luke x. 27. Whence St. Augustin says: (Tr. 5, in ep. Joan. n. 7, t. 3, par. p. 2, 860,) "Love alone distinguishes the sons of God and the sons of the devil." There he speaks not of habitual charity, but of any simple act; for he alleges the act of love in St. Peter, saying, "I love thee." John xxi. And St. Chrysostom speaks thus: (Hom. 7, in 2 Tim. t. 12, p. 703,) "As fire entering a wood cleanses all before it, so the fervour of love, wheresoever it shall fall, takes away all evils: where charity is present, all sins are immediately blotted out." How earnest ought I to be in employing all means to obtain of God's mercy this extraordinary treasure of a perfect contrition for my sins?

11. The chief means to obtain the grace of a true contrition are persevering and earnest prayer, holy meditation, and the exercise of good works for this end. Firstly, it must be fervently asked of God, as it is the free gift only of his mercy, a work entirely surpassing our endeavours, and totally supernatural. God inviting us to repent offers his grace to us, but will have us to ask it of him with an earnestness and perseverance suitable to the importance and dignity of the gift. We sin indeed of ourselves, but cannot repent of ourselves. "Thy perdition is from thyself; thy relief only in me," says God. Ose. xiii. 9. It is to him then we are to address ourselves; it is only by his grace that we have even a voice left us in our frightful miseries to cry out to him for his great mercy. Finding my soul deprived of the unction of holy compunction, I must imitate Caleb's daughter, who, having received from her father a barren land for her portion, representing this to him, obtained one doubly watered above and below. Judg. i. 15. In like manner must my soul represent her barrenness to God. She will not fail, by persevering in fervent prayer, to obtain from him the double spirit of penance, which will make her fertile in all heavenly fruits. Repeating often, in the deepest sense of her necessities: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me," she will at length, in the midst of her prayer, find herself stirred up to a spirit of compunction, and a thrice happy change of heart.

12. The second means is, that the sinner, after prayer, penetrate himself perfectly with the proper motives of fear and love, &c., by seriously meditating on them with fervent affections and ejaculations. Souls which live in habitual grace, and in the holy fear of God, easily stir up acts of compunction, by proposing to themselves proper motives only of love. But for general confessions, and at all times in habitual sinners, much greater and longer endeavours are required. Such persons ought first, for some time, and that not inconsiderable, at intervals, meditate upon the last things, the enormity of sin, and other such motives; and, during the rest of the day, repeat frequently to themselves the most moving aspirations of their meditations. By repeating the blows, the viper in the heart will at last be killed. After the motives of fear, or rather at different pauses during the same time, let them consider Christ bleeding for their sins. No motive is more powerful to stir up the soul to compunction than this. "No heart can be so hard as not to be softened by the meditation of Christ's passion," says Gerson from St. Bernard. Let them also consider the benefits of God, his greatness, goodness, and other perfections, with all the motives of his holy love. Proper meditations may be chosen on all these subjects for a general confession. Or some of these motives may be seriously ru-

minated, as summed up in the "Garden of the Soul," Gother; Lewis of Granada's "Memorial," vol. 1; Gobinet's "Instructions for Youth," vol. 2, &c. The acts must be reiterated often, that the heart may be worked at last into a perfect change. One stroke of the axe does not fell a great tree, especially if it be deeply rooted in the ground. It is a most necessary caution to all penitents, that they remember it is not enough to conceive fine thoughts, or to read over the best motives or acts of contrition in books. Contrition consists in the affections, or in the heart, not in barren thoughts, which books suggest, and which are merely means, by which the heart is to be moved and entirely broken. They must then be attentively pondered, and the sentiments, which they inspire, will be as so many nails driven into the heart.

13. A third means to obtain contrition is, the exercise of works of penance offered up for that end, such as humiliation, alms, fasts, and other mortifications. This was eminently the practice of the ancient holy penitents, before they promised themselves so great a mercy from God's grace, as a true repentance after a grievous fall. According to the more ordinary dispensations of his providence, compunction is not to be found in the houses of pleasure, or amidst jollities and diversions. It is the offspring of an afflicted heart, ruminating its sins in the bitterness of its soul, and in a horror of delights. "Compunction alone makes a soul abhor purple, desire haircloth, love tears, fly laughter. As it is impossible that fire should be kindled in water, so is it impossible that compunction should live or be bred in delights. It is the mother of tears, these of laughter; it straitens the heart, they dissolve it;" as St. Chrysostom writes, l. de Compunct. t. 1. Sir Thomas More, b. 2, "Of Comfort," c. 7, gives this excellent advice: "If a man cannot weep for his sins as he would, let him desire it." And according to the advice of Gerson: "The less affliction he feeleth in the soul, the more pain, in recompence, let him put upon his body, and purge the spirit by the affliction of the flesh. He that doeth so, shall find his hard heart relent into tears, and into a wholesome heaviness, and a heavenly gladness too, if he joins faithful prayer."

A small alms given in this spirit, and for this end, many have experienced to be of wonderful efficacy. Such a liberality to Christ, in his poor members, moves his bounty to a munificent return of mercy and grace. A very holy author gives us the following example:[a] "I knew," says he, "a sinner, who desiring to be converted, and not being able to weep as he wished, went out of his house one day, oppressed with sorrow, not knowing whither to go to seek some comfort. He found at his door a poor man, whose misery seemed to him extreme. He was moved, and remembering that our Lord said, whatever was done to them was done to him, returned into his house with the poor man, threw himself at his feet, and in this humble posture said in his heart to Jesus Christ: Lord, who art here present in this poor beggar, could I give you my heart? but it is too hard; I dare not offer it to you, nor would you accept of it; receive, however, this loaf, which I give you, and change my heart. This act of humility and charity was so efficacious, that he found suddenly his heart rent with the most tender sorrow, and his eyes bathed in tears. God afterwards bestowed on him many signal graces."

As the affliction of the heart by contrition must bear a proportion with the sins, so the endeavours to obtain it must be proportioned to this.

[a] F. Tho. of Jesus, Suffr. c. 19, t. 1, p. 435.

VARIOUS METHODS OF FORMING ACTS OF CONTRITION.

1. Imagine yourself at the very gates of hell or purgatory, as if just ready to fall into that abyss: here contemplate those horrible dungeons, frightful lakes of fire, various tortures, and hellish monsters and devils. Reflect that you deserved a place in that pit long ago, and that God's justice is, perhaps, now wearied with long forbearance, just ready to precipitate you into it. With all the earnestness of your soul, cry out long to him to have patience a little longer with you, and for the undeserved grace to bewail your offences and disarm his justice. Consider the damned souls, and what they suffer. See many there, who were cut off immediately after their sin; many lost for one only sin; many snatched away, younger, stronger, richer, more likely to have lived longer and done penance than you are. Why are you distinguished from them by so singular a mercy? Tremble, and let this fear sink deep into your heart. Seek to recover grace by tears. Consider its uncertainty, and how easily you might have already been snatched away in sin. Only God's goodness withheld your destruction. Admire and praise, in this point, God's unspeakable mercy to you; detest your base ingratitude and insensibility; now love, and resolve ever faithfully to serve so gracious a God. Consider how terrible it is to behold the punishment of others, while you feel a consciousness of your own guilt. What criminal could see the execution of the accomplices of his treason, whilst his own guilt was equally known to the judge, and not be seized with dread?

2. Prostrate before a crucifix, humbling yourself, as much as possible, in the posture of your body, and far more in spirit, and covered with confusion under the ignominy of your guilt, consider that he, who suffered on the cross, was the eternal God, Lord and Creator of all things; that he underwent it all for you, a base worm of the earth, then in a state of sin and his enemy. Yet such was his goodness and his love for you, that to rescue you from everlasting flames, he took upon himself your crimes, and made himself the victim for you, to satisfy his Father's justice. Run over distinctly in mind all he endured, from the garden to his last breath on the cross. At each torment, contumely, and insult upon this spotless Lamb of God, reproach yourself as the real author of it, and turn your indignation and grief against your criminal heart. Penetrate in spirit into his divine soul, and consider its most bitter anguish on the cross, crying out that his Father had abandoned him without comfort, and in the garden venting itself by a bloody sweat gushing forth through every pore of his sacred body. Those streams of blood, those tears he shed, that inward extraordinary sorrow of his soul, were all to lament for your sins. Can you see a God so grieve for them, and not weep for them yourself, and mingle your sorrow with his? Remember with what love under all his pains he thought continually of you, and pleaded your cause with his Father, and earnestly desired your salvation, as the fruit and recompence of all his sufferings. Dwell upon this spectacle, and the consideration of all his love, till it has softened your heart into the most feeling contrition. Weep over, and salute each wound apart, repeating that your sins caused it. With Magdalen, wash them with your tears. Address yourself in these aspirations to your Redeemer: "O loving Saviour of my soul, your wounds, your blood, your anguish, your death and infinite merits are, by your goodness, made over to me; you offered them all to your eternal

Father for my pardon and salvation. Present them to him to obtain for me, from his mercy, the grace of a perfect contrition. He can never be deaf to such a voice, nor defer one moment the infinite favour. I am the most base and undeserving of creatures; but your interposition will still procure me this great grace. You still retain the same bowels and love for me, which you had on mount Calvary: "you live always to intercede for us." Heb. vii. 25. Refuse me not then this fruit of your bitter sufferings. I desire to grieve for my sins with you, and upon the same most pure motive, for which you so bitterly bewailed them. I unite my contrition with your most holy sorrow. You grieved for my sins as they deserve, because you knew their malice and enormity. "May your perfect sorrow supply all the imperfection and defect of mine."

Address yourself also to the Father, begging that he turn his face from your sins, and look on the face of his Christ: that the sight of the wounds and bleeding sacrifice of his ever well beloved Son move him to pardon your past ingratitude. Conjure him with all possible earnestness by the same Redeemer, in whose name he has engaged himself never to reject any request that should be presented to him, never to suffer you to offend him more, and to accept the sacrifice of a contrite heart, which you offer him for your past offences, and with it, to make it acceptable and to supply its infinite deficiency, the sorrow and sufferings of his Son, an infinite and superabundant satisfaction for all sin.

In considering each of the other motives of contrition, when the soul is worked into the greatest sense, horror, and grief of her sin, let her then never fail to have recourse to the passion of Christ, to excite her confidence and hope; and to offer it to God in reparation.

3. In the deepest humiliation of soul, weigh seriously the enormity of mortal (or venial) sin, upon the articles of those meditations above; reflect, that it is the sovereign evil, object of the infinite and eternal hatred of a God, the parent of hell and of all that is monstrous in the devils, and the cause of all the miseries in the universe. Run over the dreadful havoc it has made in your soul, and weep over it. St. Ambrose writes thus to a virgin fallen into sin: (T. 5, 621,) "I will weeping employ the lamentations of the Prophet, and invite all to join their tears with mine. Hear only the cause of my grief, and you will judge whether my sorrow is not just. Where shall I begin? What shall I say first, and what last? Shall I mention what thou hast lost, or what thou hast found? Thou wast a virgin in the paradise of God, amongst the flowers of the church. Thou wast the spouse of Christ. Thou wast the temple of God, and the dwelling of the Holy Ghost. When I say, thou wast, so often must thou weep, that thou art not now what thou wast. Thou didst shine as silver and sparkle as gold. Thou wast a bright star in the hand of God. What sudden change! What dismal catastrophe! Thou art now made the corruption of Satan, an execrable harlot, a sink of uncleanness, a filthy sty of the devil. Thy star is fallen from heaven, extinct and changed into a black coal: doubly wo to thee, who hast forfeited such high things for a moment's pleasure. How will the Holy Ghost again visit thee? He flies from all that is impure. What saint can approach thee for horror? Thou darest not open thy eyes to look up to any of them. When I come to mention thy crime, my mind is filled with horror, my heart fails, and my spirits faint away. A surgeon laying open a putrid ulcer, let him be ever

so stout, must feel his heart grow faint under the operation, when he comes to the bottom."

St. Chrysostom wished he could have sent a letter filled with tears to his old friend Theodore, fallen from the service of God, and repeated over him the lamentations of Jeremy, with tears much more just, as he says, for the ruin of his soul, than those were, which that prophet had so abundantly shed over the material city of Jerusalem. (T. 1. 15, 35.) A mother weeps over an only dear child, snatched from her by temporal death; and shall I have no tears to bewail the much more terrible death of my only one, my immortal soul, where alone tears can be profitable? For they have the miraculous power of raising me again to my spiritual life.

4. Consider the infinite majesty, goodness, and benefits of him, whom you have offended. Blossius sums up the principal nearly as follows: each sentence is to be attentively and affectually repeated in the heart.

My God is the King of all ages, and the Lord of supreme majesty, riches, nobility, and excellence; most high, omnipotent, and eternal. He created the wide heavens, the earth, and all other things, visible and invisible, out of nothing, by the sole word of his will, and preserves them every moment from sinking again into nothing, and governs, directs, and moves them in all their parts without labour. He dwells in inaccessible light, whither no man can approach; yet he is all every where, and invisibly fills the whole visible world, and all its parts and every place. He sees all things most clearly, and penetrates through and through the most secret thoughts and affections of men's hearts. He knows most perfectly all things, past, present, and to come. His greatness, wisdom, dignity, and glory, have no bounds or end. He is infinitely holy, infinitely beautiful, infinitely sweet, infinitely pious, merciful, good, and infinite in all manner of perfections. He is infinitely worthy of all praise, love, and adoration from all creatures; and infinitely surpasses all. He is blessed, and super-exalted, and glorious for all ages. No creatures can comprehend the least of his attributes; all are lost in the contemplation of his boundless power, wisdom, love, delights, and every other perfection: for, though we give to them the utmost extent which our imagination can reach to, and multiply them ever so often, we shall still be infinitely short. But what am I? a base worm of the earth, dust and ashes, poor, weak, and miserable, to whom it is a great benefit to be suffered to crawl upon my fellow dust. I am of myself nothing but weakness, impotency, and sin; and from myself, or by my own strength, am capable of nothing, and able to do nothing but sin. Moreover born in sin, a child of wrath, and an enemy of God, I came into this world unworthy to breathe the air, to behold the light, to be borne upon the earth, or to enjoy the service of any creatures, being a just object of universal and eternal horror, contempt, enmity, and punishment.

My God has been from all eternity the most faithful, most constant, and disinterested lover of me, his ungrateful creature. He loved me before I was, and saw me in the abyss of nothing, in which I lay buried. Out of pure gratuitous love and goodness for me from eternity, he ever thought on me with infinite complacency, affection, and tenderness; entertained the greatest designs of mercy in my favour; and decreed to draw me out of my nothing, and give me this noble being, which he graciously bestowed on me in time, making me a rational creature, capable of loving, praising, and enjoying him, stamping on my immortal soul his own most

glorious image. And, O stupendous! O affectionate, and to be ever affectionately remembered mercy! when I by sin was become his enemy, and lay under the guilt and sentence of eternal damnation, this high God, though he had shown no pity on the rebel angels, was yet penetrated with an inconceivable love of me, which stopped, nay, overcame and disarmed his justice. He, quite vanquished by his mercy and compassion, took upon himself my nature, and, becoming man, my God was made my brother in flesh. Lest I should remain disinherited from his kingdom of glory, and perish everlastingly, labouring above thirty years for me, he wrought my salvation. For my sake he poured forth his most precious blood to the last drop, and most cheerfully and with joy underwent contumelies, injuries, the utmost contempt, horrible torments, and an ignominious death. Thus did this amiable God redeem me, and recover for me that title to happiness, which by my crimes I had justly forfeited. Oh! what did he see in me to set such a value on me? I could have nothing in me, which he could stand in need of, as he is infinite in all riches in himself, and no creature has any good thing or any perfection but what is from him, and his gratuitous gift. What then could he see in me, who was only filth and sin? O, how did he love me, so base and vile a creature, to do so much for me!

These benefits are common to me and other men; but not less on that account granted to me: and there are others, in which God was pleased to distinguish me in particular. How did my God choose me before others, no ways more base or undeserving, and call me to his heavenly kingdom, by so many graces, and, notwithstanding my malice, ceases not still to invite, and even, as it were, to compel, spur on, entice, encourage, terrify, and on every side besiege me with his graces! He has kept me out of so many infidel and barbarous nations, to be born in his holy faith; out of so many countries and families, led away by heresy and schism, to be nourished in the bosom of his true Church; out of the society of so many who are brought up in ignorance, to be taught his holy law; so that I am inexcusable above others, in not having kept his commandments. He washed me from the stain of original sin by the holy laver of baptism, and from the commencement of my infancy received me to be his adopted son and co-heir with Christ, his co-eternal and consubstantial Son. From my very birth he has always to this moment preserved, protected, and guarded me; and even then, when my wicked will ran away from him, he did not abandon me; but whilst I was offending him, and justly deserved to be plunged into hell for my crimes, he supported me, and gave me that breath and life, that faculty of acting, and that very movement of my body, which I most perversely abused to insult him. Moreover, dissembling so great an injury from so base a worm, he laboured, by his inspirations, to overcome my malice, and draw me to himself; nor, when I, by an unheard of wickedness, stopped my ears against his voice, and continued more boldly in sin upon the encouragement of his patience and mercy, making his goodness a motive and incitement to fly in his face, did he immediately punish my insolence and so great injuries; but giving me time to do penance, still invites me to him. He also instituted the saving sacrament of penance, that, if my soul should fall again and suffer shipwreck after baptism, it might have a plank yet remaining to be saved by, that I might not perish. Without this great and wonderful mercy, O! where would my wretched soul have now been? I cannot think of it without horror and

dread. Even now her dwelling had been in the bottomless pit, in the midst of boiling furnaces of raging flames, under the most frightful torments, in everlasting darkness, endless death, and inexpressible and never ceasing anguish, with hellish scorpions and devils. But my God and true Saviour has rescued me from all this by repeated wonderful deliverances, and by means of infinite mercy, which I can never be sufficiently astonished to consider.

Nor did he here set bounds to his benefits and mercies. All this was not sufficient to satisfy the excess of his love and bounty; but he also composed a love-potion, in which he would give me all that an Almighty God could bestow; for by his omnipotent wisdom he designed, and by his omnipotent power he instituted the sacrament of the blessed Eucharist, in which, under the veils of my ordinary food, he gave me his precious flesh and blood, with his soul and divinity, to incorporate himself with me, remain in me, and to make me remain always in him, and be one with him. O wonderful institution! O thrice happy, thrice glorious union of love! whereby my God, not only spiritually, but also by the closest conjunction of substances, dwells in my breast, inflames and strengthens me with his divine presence, enriches me with the effusion of all his heavenly graces, and vouchsafes to be himself my comfort and protector, lest I faint in the way. He instituted also the other sacraments, by which, as by so many channels, he might bestow his graces upon me, adapted to my wants and necessities.

Yet I have always been insensible and ungrateful, repaying him with evil for so much and such continual good. When he had redeemed me from hell, and cleansed me from sin, I again enslaved myself to the devil, and subjected myself under his yoke, not forced to this, but choosing by my own free will to serve him rather than be faithful to my God, who had most mercifully broken my chains, not once, but many times. O truly, the more benefits he has heaped upon me, the more grievous sins have I most ungratefully repaid him with in return. He, when I was in open rebellion against him, bore me in my heinous sins, all that time employing many ways to recall me from perdition; and when he had overcome my obstinacy, and drawn me back to himself, he received me most graciously, forgave me my innumerable crimes, admitted me again to his favour, truly the good Father to his prodigal son, and endowed me with his treasures; yet I dared still again to revolt from him. O my soul, how canst thou consider this thy baseness, and not be overwhelmed with regret and confusion! Reflect further, that God's patience still waits for thy return, ready again to forget thy relapses, upon thy sincere repentance. Is not my heart ready to burst at the sight of such a goodness, and which I could, nay, have so basely insulted? Every moment of my whole life has been marked with many and great benefits, both spiritual and corporal: how long and how often has he borne with my repeated infidelities and outrages? How mercifully has he forgiven them, whilst many younger, stronger, and less guilty have been abandoned by him, or cut off and buried in hell for lesser offences? How are they in their flames at this moment, the most moving and most sensible proof of God's most distinguishing mercy to me, the most undeserving and unworthy of all creatures; the remembrance whereof melts my stony heart with the deepest sense of my ingratitude. Again, he has ever restrained the raging lion, whose power, malice, and craft were otherwise an overmatch for me, and who sought continually to devour me. How

many occasions of sin did he remove; how many temptations and dangers did he prevent, into which I should have otherwise fallen? Under the temptations, into which I fell, how many precious victorious graces did he not bestow upon me? by which he made me triumphant over my enemies, and delivered me out of their very jaws open to have swallowed me up. There is no evil, corporal or spiritual, no sin nor depth of misery that one man can fall into, into which I might not, and should not fall, did not God ever deliver me from it by special succours, either of the order of nature, or of the supernatural order of grace. Whatever cruel tortures, disgraces, racking diseases, miserable deaths, or other corporal calamities; whatever evils of the soul in the most hardened and abandoned sinners I can imagine to myself, either real in any wretches that ever were in this world, or even possible in any, at the very name or thought of which I tremble, and almost sink away, would have been my own lot, had not a single mercy of my God protected me from them. To him I am indebted for all this, and for my deliverance from the pains of hell. When I consider them in detail, and reflect that I ought to have been buried in them for endless enternity, how do I shudder, how do I bless and praise, with all my powers, and with all my affections, that God, whose pure goodness has rescued me from them!

On the other side, I am lost in entering into a detail of the innumerable graces and favours, with which he has continually enriched, adorned, purified, strengthened, awakened, terrified, encouraged, and supported me; and the sweet consolations and melting embraces of his love, with which he has often cherished and comforted me. He has ever watched and loved me as the apple of his eye. Every breath I drew, every moment he gave me, every adversity as well as prosperity which he sent me, was the effect of his love, which has never ceased showering fresh benefits upon me, and which were intended for, and have excited me to turn them all to my great good. He forgets nothing that I do, hear, speak, or desire for his honour, and through his love; and suffers not the least good thoughts, which his grace forms in me, to be lost; but reserves all most faithfully within himself, to be recomposed with everlasting crowns, notwithstanding the imperfections with which I use them, never perfectly faithful to his grace. He has prepared for me his most glorious and most beautiful kingdom of delights, in which, upon the only and easy condition that I love him, (which is otherwise my most indispensable duty and my happiness,) he will give himself with all his infinite perfections and joys to be my reward, truly exceeding great, beyond all bounds and measure. Though infinitely happy in himself, he will not be happy without me, and without the company of so vile a creature, and so base a sinner, if I only consent to love him. He has given me his own holy mother for comfortress and advocate; all the blessed spirits for my patrons and intercessors; and all the saints for examples to imitate, and to walk after in their steps, as they laboured under the same weaknesses and difficulties here on earth, and I enjoy the same succours. He has committed the care of me to a most noble spirit, an angel, one of the high princes of his heavenly court, whom he has appointed to be my faithful guardian in all my steps. He himself watches over me, and ordains all things in the universe, which can directly or indirectly concern me, with as much tenderness, affection, and attention for me, as if I were the only person in the world, burning with the most constant and most ardent desire of my salvation. Ah! no mother

loves her only son so tenderly as my high God loves and cherishes me. His love for me is most sweet, most ardent, and truly without bounds. But I, alas! have always been, and am, ungrateful and unfaithful, rendering evil for good, and many ways destroying and hindering his gifts and graces in me, breaking my most solemn engagements, so often renewed to him, though I should be ashamed to violate my simple word given to a man in a temporal contract, and profaning what God had most solemnly consecrated and sanctified.

Recollect in general, my soul, all the different crimes, of which thou hast been guilty, and how often thou hast repeated any of them: run over all the states and organs of thy body, and thou wilt see that all have been abused against thy God and the end of thy creation; behold thyself over-run and all covered with hideous ulcers. Consider the just and tender reproaches thy God will make thee for thy base return for each of his benefits, in particular, your creation, conservation, redemption, &c., which no heart can feel without being softened into tears of compunction: as drops of rain often falling, hollow the hardest stone, so repeat these reflections in short pathetic aspirations, till thy adamantine heart be quite pierced and bruised, and these two eyes be made two perpetual sources of tears. Help me, O angels of heaven, and all you glorious saints, inhabitants of paradise; particularly you blessed penitents, and my special patrons, implore this great mercy from the Father of mercies for the most miserable of sinners. O queen of heaven, refuge of sinners, mother of all men redeemed by Christ, obtain by your intercession this grace for me, through the adorable blood of your divine Son spilt for sinners. O God of pity, by the merits of your sacred passion, have pity on my folly, impiety, and ingratitude, the abyss of which you alone penetrate and understand. I am unworthy even to lift up my eyes towards you, or to call for mercy: but prostrate on the ground, my heart cries to you in its deep groans in silence, not daring to employ my voice, or raise my countenance. May your ears be open to my earnest inward cry, with which I beg that you mercifully enlighten my understanding, to see and deeply penetrate my heart; sincerely to bewail all my ingratitude: nor will I cease till I can hope, by your grace, that I have obtained this greatest of mercies.

5. The penitential psalms contain the most perfect sentiments of penance, with which the Holy Ghost inspired the royal penitent and prophet, to serve as a model for all penitents of succeeding ages, whereby to form in themselves that holy spirit of penance. In the primitive ages the pastors of the church recited them frequently over penitents during their stage of canonical satisfaction, and enjoined them often to repeat them. St. Augustin, in his last sickness, caused them to be wrote out and hung by his bed-side, and scarcely ceased to recite them, with abundance of tears, to his last breath. St. Ambrose, writing to the fallen virgin, (ch. 10,) bids her to recite every day the 50th psalm, and to repeat continually in her heart some moving sentences of penance, drawn from the psalms and prophets, bewailing herself with perpetual tears and fasting. The Holy Ghost will be the best Master of this spirit of compunction in these holy prayers, to those whom he has truly animated with it. But, for a help to the more ignorant, a paraphrase of the Miserere and De profundis is subjoined, which may be varied, as every one's devotion will easily suggest from this model, both in these and in the other psalms.

Verse 1. I lie buried and rotting in the most filthy stench and sink of sin; I am quite overwhelmed with the miseries of my baseness and injustice; yet I have been blind, and have not seen the evils which encompass me. Like the sinner reproached, Apoc. iii. 17, I am miserable, and have not known it. What advantages have I lost? What a glorious state, and what high prerogatives am I fallen from? And into what a frightful abyss of miseries? How innumerable and how dreadful are the evils I groan under in my sins! How horrible are those eternal ones, into which I am just ready to be plunged as the just recompense of my guilt! O most wretched condition to which I am reduced, which no words can express, nor all created understandings together conceive! Only an infinite God, who alone knows his own infinite perfections, can fathom the depth of my wounds or the enormity of treasons committed by a base creature against his adorable Majesty. Angels of heaven, who penetrate, as far as creatures are able to do, the frightful miseries of my soul, be moved to pity at their sight, and weep over them with me. I am still too insensible and blind under them, though I begin to have so much feeling of them as to roar, howl, and tremble under them. Immortal thanks to you, my God, who have opened my eyes, have scattered those clouds which caused my darkness, and have discovered to me my iniquity by a mercy promised, Isa. xlii. 16: "I will lead the blind into a way which they know not: I will put their darkness before them into light." Miserere.

The deep feeling of my extreme miseries makes me most earnestly seek a remedy for them. For this I prostrate myself before your throne, O Lord of infinite majesty, whom I have most basely offended To whom else could I have recourse but to you? I have sinned against you. My evil is so great, that all creatures could never afford me the least relief: they all could never protect me, as they are all nothing before you. Moreover, as long as I remain your enemy, they all join you, their Maker, arming themselves against me, a rebel, ready to execute your justice upon me. To you, then, do I fly, who alone are able to relieve me. My condition is every way most miserable, and, without you, desperate; but by an only word you can at once entirely restore me. Therefore, I cast myself at the foot of your throne; but am not able to lift up my eyes towards heaven, or to pronounce any of your sacred names, without bursting into a flood of tears. How dare I call you Father, who have renounced your authority? or King, who have withdrawn myself from your sweet obedience, and cast off your holy law? or Judge, the remembrance of which quality overwhelms me with dread and terror? or God, which name includes all your titles and greatness in one, all which I have injured? Nevertheless, you, the best of fathers, still remember that I am the work of your hands; and though I have impiously effaced your divine image, stamped by grace and original justice on me, by which I bore a resemblance with your infinite Majesty, you yet discover the traces of it in my disfigured soul, and love me still, nor yet cease to invite me to mercy.

If I am baseness and unworthiness itself, you are mercy itself; your goodness and pity know no bounds. Where shall I hope for pity so confidently as in the fountain of pity and mercy? I, therefore, prostrate before you, implore your clemency, and conjure you by the bowels of your goodness to have compassion on me. It is your amiable property to have mercy. Misery is the proper object of pity, as guilt is of indignation. Suffer not my heinous crimes to provoke your just anger against me; but

rather may my calamities excite your tenderness. What is a more moving object to infinite goodness than extreme distress? Behold the only title on which I sue for pardon; it is not that I have any claim to it on account of anything in me that might deserve it, but only because your goodness is infinite. Can you forget your own nature? To show mercy is your property, your delight, and peculiarly your own work. Can you refuse to exercise it upon me? The abyss of my misery implores the abyss of your mercy. Though my iniquity and evils are extreme, your goodness is still greater, and infinitely surpasses them. Let it, then, be moved with compassion at them, and apply its sovereign remedy to remove and heal them. As you love my soul, you cannot behold its miseries, and not pity me. "Have mercy on me, therefore, O God, according to thy great mercy." They who sin by ignorance or inadvertence; they who have offended in smaller points, stand in need of your ordinary mercy. I have sinned by malice, and cannot be relieved without your great mercy. The justification of any sinner is a greater work than the creation of the universe. I am a relapsed, perfidious, ungrateful, base, and sacrilegious sinner; and cannot be delivered but by an effect of your highest mercy. I have multiplied sins beyond the number of the hairs of my head; I have offended you by all my members and faculties. I have broken not one, but, by some offence or other, all your holy laws, trespassing in each of all my duties to you, and adding, every day of my life, since I have been capable of sinning, some new transgressions. I therefore beg your compassion according to your great mercy.

V. 2. "And according to the multitude of your commiserations." My numberless and complicated crimes cannot be washed away without innumerable mercies. But how often soever I may have offended, you have infinitely more mercies, as they are inexhaustible. You are able to pardon, not only seventy-seven or a thousand times, but as often as any creature can have offended, if he sincerely return to you with a proportioned repentance; for your mercy is not confined by either number or bounds. You are also rich in the multitude of your mercies, which you have shown to innumerable penitent sinners; nor are they by this in the least impaired. You exercised them on all, whoever sincerely implored them. All the saints have been saved only by them. Your clemency does not suffer by the multitude of its acts, but ardently seeks penitent souls to save them. You have mercies reserved for me, and have given me most assured pledges of them; though my sins are most grievous, and without number, my comfort is this multitude of your mercies. I then have recourse to you with confidence, sensible, indeed, of the depth of my wounds, but placing all my hope in your inexhaustible source of goodness, and earnestly conjuring it, by your bowels of compassion, that you blot out my iniquity.

V. 3. I am become a loathsome nest of filth and stench, altogether insupportable in your divine eye, and even to myself. Wash me, O Lord: you alone can cleanse my soul. Should I bathe myself every day and night in floods of my tears and blood; should I undergo, in a spirit of penance, all that martyrs, confessors, or holy solitaries have ever gone through for your glory, and have all the angels, saints, and men on earth associates of my endeavours and labours, I could never wash off the stain of the least venial sin. Your precious blood, O God, is the only bath that can purify me. You alone can make me clean. Cleanse me then, O merciful Lord. Behold, I sigh before you, because my wounds are putrified

and filled with stench. "I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly. I roar out from the groaning of my heart. O Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my sighing is not hid from thee. My heart is disturbed within me; my strength has forsaken me, and even the light of my eyes is not with me." Ps. xxxvii. Why, therefore, O Lord, do you not blot out my iniquity? You have, I hope, washed me already; but not enough, I fear, to remove all the remains of my sin. Wash me again and again; cleanse me entirely. Touch my heart; give me a bath of my tears, flowing from the most perfect compunction, equal to the enormity of my sins; let these never cease to wash me more and more by the virtue of your adorable blood.

V. 4. I know, confess, condemn, and bewail my guilt. Arise, then, O Lord, according to your holy engagement and law, your promise to penitent sinners, and remit my offences. I was long in darkness; I was blind, and loved my blindness. I was in sin; heaven was incensed against me; you were my enemy; hell was ready to swallow me up; yet I could laugh and sleep, such was my insensibility. But I have now opened my eyes. I see all my misery and heinous guilt. My sin stands always against me, ever stinging my conscience, and cruelly reproaching me.

V. 5. I see clearly, and confess with bitter regret and shame, that by my sin I lifted up my hand against you, though, alas! I did not then consider it: yes, against you, a God who had created me, and who held my life in your hand. O felony! against a God who had redeemed me from hell, and given me the life of grace by dying for me. O ingratitude! against a God who loved me from eternity, and heaped innumerable, inestimable benefits upon me. O baseness! against a God to whom I had vowed fidelity in baptism. O perfidiousness! against a God who that moment could throw me, body and soul, into hell. O insensibility! I sinned against you, my God, whom I ought by all titles to have served, feared, and loved with my whole heart, soul, and strength! O blindness! O sacrilege!

So far did I carry my insolence and malice, as to sin against you in your very presence, and to do evil before those very eyes, which cannot bear to behold any iniquity. For, wherever I went, in whatever caverns I hid myself, I was always in your presence; your eyes always beheld me. And, though I feared the sight of men, I boldly feared not yours; but disobeyed and insulted you to your face.

"I have sinned against you alone," and it is only your offence that I consider and so grievously regret. I have scandalized and injured men; but even then I offended you, for whose sake I was bound to love them. And the offence against your infinite Majesty is so enormous that the rest all disappears. For the remedy of this evil what shall I do? To whom shall I fly? Only to you yourself, my God; for who else could heal me? And who is so good, so merciful, so full of compassion? You came from heaven to call sinners; you died to draw them to you; you invite those who are burdened, and engage yourself to ease and relieve them. Behold, I come loaden, weighed down under my sins: remove my heavy burden; overcome my malice by your mercy. Thus will you overcome in fidelity to your promises of mercy to sinners, when your sweet providence shall be considered and judged by men, most true, faithful, and merciful, as it is.

V. 6. O tender Samaritan, look on my frightful condition, pity my miseries, and heal my wounds. I was even conceived in original sin, and

from it draw concupiscence, weakness, a proneness and inclination to evil; which, unhappily, I have not subdued, but enslaved myself to, and thus plunged my immortal soul into my present abyss of miseries, so much deserving tears.

V. 7. Deliver me, because you love truth and cannot violate your divine word. You always most faithfully observed your sacred promises to Noe, Abraham, the other patriarchs, the Jews, sinners, and all men, and are incapable of ever failing in any tittle of them, because you are the lover of truth. As you have promised pardon to all sincere penitents, you could never reject any sinner returning to you; nor can you reject me, if, by your grace, I truly implore your mercy. Touch my heart with a perfect repentance, and then receive me to pardon according to your word; for you are ever faithful to it on your side. But you love truth also in me, *i. e.* sincere repentance. Give me such a repentance.

"You have revealed to me the hidden mysteries of your wisdom." Have you given me this divine knowledge of your faith and most wonderful redemption by your Son that it should be fruitless in me? No. Your desire is, that I partake of its fruits. The wise men of the world knew not these saving truths: the curious searchers of nature pried above the heavens, and carried their eyes on every side; but could never find out these mysteries of your wisdom. Yet you have revealed them to the little ones, and among them to me. But do I know them in vain, or so as not to be saved by them? Thus they would only aggravate my miseries. Avert such an evil, for your infinite mercy's sake. Your calling me to your faith, and manifesting your saving truths to me, is a pledge of your singular predilection for me. Complete your mercy towards me, and restore me to your favour, by the pardon of my offences.

V. 8. Sprinkle me, O Lord, not with hyssop dipped in the blood of goats and oxen, the weak sacrifices of the old law, unable to cleanse my sinful soul, but with the blood of your Son, the immaculate Lamb, who offered himself a bleeding victim for me. All the saints have their robes whitened only by this; all were cleansed by this holy flood. I am indeed more defiled; but it is of infinite virtue, and can perfectly cleanse me, though my sins were ever so numerous and enormous. Wash, then, my soul here, and I shall be cleansed and made whiter than snow.

V. 9. What a joy will it be to my bruised heart, under my terrors and amidst my fears, to hear that word of sweetness from your divine mouth: "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace. Thy chains are loosed; the heavens are again opened to thee!" How will my bones, broken with sorrow, exult and rejoice at that sentence of comfort! But oh! still more shall I triumph and be overwhelmed with joy at your tribunal, and in everlasting glory! How shall I for ever bless my penance, my grief, my tears, which shall have purified me on earth, and purchased me so immense a glory! How shall I eternally sing in overflowing jubilation of heart: Happy, thrice happy penance, which has shut the gates of hell, and procured me this so great, so perfect a bliss!

V. 10. How should I not weep and do penance, by this means to disarm thy justice? I see your infinite indignation kindled against me for my sins. I see your just anger over me as a raging sea swoln, ready to swallow me up; as a high mountain ready to fall on me and crush me; as thunder ready to reduce me to ashes. A mortal dread seizes my heart. Ashes and tears are my food. I roar through the excess of fear and grief,

and cry out with a devout penitent soul;[a] "Lord Jesus Christ, future Judge of the world, I, a guilty criminal, considering the terrors of your tribunal, trembling cry out to you: Lord, reprove me not in your fury, nor chastise me in your wrath. Wo to me! How could I insolently provoke your immense clemency to fury, and your infinite mercy to anger! I have justly deserved your indignation: I confess it trembling. But this fury is not in you and in your affection; but out of you, and in your actions and effects: for you are always the same." In your fury, you are calm within yourself. Your fury is the torments of hell; your anger the pains of purgatory, in which you chastise to save. I pray to be delivered from both. But by what means? Upon what do I rely? Upon what do I build my hopes? Not on my justice or deserts, but purely on your mercy. "Have mercy on me, because I am infirm." I allege no plea but my sickness and wounds, and your omnipotence and clemency. I am sick; you are my physician. Heal me therefore. Here apply what remedies it shall please you. Here cut; here burn; only deliver me from your fury, from the severity of your justice in the world to come. O compassionate tender physician, "heal me; for all my bones are disturbed. I have laboured in my groanings; I will wash my bed every night with my tears." Ps. vi. In this affliction of spirit, I will never cease to cry out to you with all the earnestness of my broken heart. Turn away your eyes from my sins. I ask not that you turn away your eyes from me: this would be to be abandoned by you. As in the order of nature I subsist only by your eyes being fixed on me, so likewise in the order of grace. But I fear your eyes being fixed on my sins. Blot them out therefore; for you cannot but see them as long as they remain. I dread your attention to my guilt, and with tears and earnestness reiterate my prayer: blot out my offences with the spunge of your infinite mercy. But I hope for this inestimable grace only by humble assiduous prayer and works of penance. These shall be my constant study and endeavours.

V. 11. My heart is defiled and corrupted; depraved, sick, languishing, and abandoned to the tyranny of its passions and irregular affections and desires. Cleanse and heal it: then make it love you alone, for whom only it was created. My mind is filled with vanity, false ideas of things, a foolish esteem of earthly joys, and a fear of phantoms. Drive away all illusions of my understanding; correct all the errors of my mind, deceived by self-love and the passions, and "create a new right spirit in me."

V. 12. "Cast me not from your face." This is the utmost, most dreadful, only misfortune. I shudder and fall away at the very thought or mention of it. I, indeed, most justly deserve it, as I have abandoned you, and deserted to your enemy's cursed banner. I have crucified my Saviour Jesus Christ, and have my hands, as it were, yet red, stained with his sacred blood. Nothing is more just than that I should be cut off by you. But then I shall be lost and eternally undone. Filled with terror at the thought, and with detestation of my madness, and grief for my baseness, I beg, with all the earnestness of my soul, that you will avert so frightful an evil. You never rejected any one who fled to you. The Cananæan woman, by persevering, at last found mercy. I throw myself at the foot of your throne, and will not cease, with tears and loud cries, to implore your pity, and begging that you rather heap upon me all temporal cala-

[a] Gerson in Ps. Pœnit. Mod. 1, t. 4, p. 6.

mities and sufferings possible, if your justice must absolutely require it; that rather pains and rottenness consume my very bones yet alive; but that you cast me not from you, and that you take not your Holy Spirit away from me. It is yet with me in some degree; for, without it, I could not even now seek you. Grant it to me in its plentitude, and may it dwell and reign in my heart. Deprive me not of its sweet presence: without it, I am nothing, and am utterly undone.

V. 13. "Restore to me the happiness of your salvation" and of your love, which replenishes the soul with inconceivable joy. The very remembrance of it fills your servants with inexpressible comfort. Your spirit is also a spirit of strength. I am a poor weak reed; but strengthen me by your powerful spirit. By it I shall be invulnerable and triumphant; by it I can do all things: without it I am nothing, and can neither rise nor stand.

V. 14. What can I do to thank your mercies? To praise you, eternity is too short. All your blessed will for ever thank and praise you with me and for me. I will labour to make all infidels and sinners know and love you, to propagate your honour and your spiritual kingdom on earth, and to make you reign in the hearts of all men. "Come and hear, and I will tell you what he has done to me." Ps. lxxiii. 13. I will announce to all the earth the terrors of your justice, and the sweets of your love and mercy. My heart is inflamed with love and gratitude: it burns with a desire, that all men may know, love, and praise you.

V. 15. You are truly the God of my salvation, seeing that you saved me from hell by a mystery, in contemplating which, angels and men will for all eternity continually lose themselves in astonishment: for such was your boundless love of me, that you, my God, were pleased to die on a cross, in exquisite torment, loaden with obloquies and ignominies, to redeem a wretch, who had incurred your most just indignation by his guilt, and deserved nothing but the eternal thunderbolts of your vengeance. O infinite goodness! O ineffable mercy and love! You then, who are the God of my salvation, save me; deliver me again from the "actions of blood," *i. e.* from the crimes, of which I am guilty, and by which I have profaned and trampled upon your precious blood spilt for my redemption. Show me this second mercy, and I shall still with greater justice praise your goodness with songs of jubilation, without ever ceasing.

V. 16. I am able to do nothing without you, much less to pray in a manner agreeable to your divine Majesty. If your grace do not touch my heart, the movement of my lips will be fruitless. Inflame then my affections, open and sanctify my lips; then, my heart burning with a desire to extol your greatness, and my mouth pronouncing your praise, my sighs, tears, and homages of adoration will be acceptable to you, my God.

V. 17. Penetrated with the deepest sense of adoration and gratitude, I cry out: "What shall I give the Lord for all the good things he has bestowed on me." (Ps. cxv. 3.) Do you desire sacrifices at my hands? With joy I offer you the sacrifice of all I am or have. "My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready." (Ps. lvi. 10.) Oh! with what joy do I offer all to you, making a sacrifice of goods, honour, reputation, my own judgment, reason, interests, my body, senses, and life, to do your holy will in all things, and to accept whatsoever it shall please you to appoint or send me? Exterior sacrifices you will not accept. It is myself, it is my heart you demand. "Son, give me thy heart," you say. I tender it to you, a heart dilated with desires to praise you, full of gratitude, ready to

receive all things from your holy will, and to undergo and do all things for your honour. O with what joy do I thus sacrifice my heart to your adorable greatness!

V. 18. But it must be a bruised heart, broken with sorrow, filled with bitterness for my iniquities. Make mine such; then you cannot but accept it. I fear a superficial repentance, which does not change the heart. This I know you abhor. Make mine sincere and perfect. I join it with the victim of the immaculate Lamb, your Son; but even that will not profit me, unless it be accompanied with that of my own heart. If I offer this, contrite and humbled, you will not despise my sacrifice. To make my offering such, I will weep, mourn, and sigh here below, without intermission. This shall be my ordinary and dearest exercise; my delight and my portion. If to be miserable is enough to make any creature weep, what misery was ever equal to mine? O tears! O groans! you cannot be better employed than in averting this great evil.

V. 19. I burn with a desire that my soul be established in grace. Also that, for your honour, your holy Church may triumph and be dilated. It is torn by infidels and heretics, and disfigured by sinners. May your kingdom flourish, and the knowledge of your holy Name and love of your goodness reign in all hearts.

V. 20. Then sacrifices of praise and thanks shall always burn to you on the altar of my heart, and likewise over your whole church on earth as in heaven.

Psalm cxxix. *De profundis.*

Verse 1. From the abyss in which I lie, from the depth of my miseries I have cried out aloud to you, O Lord. No abyss can be more horrible than that of sin, in which I am plunged. I raise out of it my eyes and my heart towards you, O source of mercy and comfort! Let my voice, notwithstanding my immense distance, penetrate to your ears; hear my prayer, I most earnestly conjure you. I ask not riches, worldly greatness, or pleasure: I implore your pardon, mercy, and grace, my only good, in comparison of which all other goods are evils. I ask, indeed, a great thing, a favour above all value, and of which I am most unworthy. But you are great, and your bounty and mercy are boundless; and he injures you, who only asks of your omnipotence trifles and foolish earthly things.

V. 2. In hell I should cry in vain for all eternity. I now redouble the ardour of my cries, whilst time is. Hear my most earnest supplications, which I send forth from the bottom of my abyss.

V. 3. Terrified at the sight of the hideous host of my sins, multiplied beyond the number of the hairs of my head, and of the horrible corruption of my heart, I cry out, trembling with fear; with tears and a heart full of bitterness, beseeching you not to look on my iniquities, but on your infinite mercies. If you treat sin with rigour, no one can stand in your presence. All the saints are saved only by your mercy. They all cry out with one voice: "Not to us, O Lord; not to us; but to thy Name give glory." How much less am I able to stand your search, being all defiled, and made up, as it were, of iniquity!

V. 4. All my hope and confidence are in your goodness: for, though I am all unworthiness, you are all mercy. You have a fund of infinite goodness and propitiation, and are both able and desirous still to pardon and save me. You have even bound yourself to show mercy to penitents by

your holy law, which is an alliance of mercy. This is to me the sure grounds of the most firm hope.

V. 5. My soul has hoped in your divine promises, as your word is in itself, and cannot fail. She has hoped, and continues always to comfort herself in your goodness, and in the riches of your mercy, which are inexhaustible.

V. 6. From the morning, or the first moment of my conversion to the end of my life, amidst all temptations and dangers, I will ever hope in the Lord. His goodness and clemency is my immoveable anchor, which nothing can shake. Let his church, with all his servants, ever hope in him.

V. 7. Because with the Lord there is a boundless ocean of mercy, and a superabundant redemption, surpassing even all the impiety of sinners possible. How sweet is it to a soul, which has offended you, and deserves to be crushed by ten thousand thunderbolts of your justice and anger, to read that "you are full of mercy," that mercy is in your heart as in its centre? O sacred plentitude! O amiable abundance! O inestimable riches! If Cain had truly known you, he could never have said: "My sin is too great to be pardoned." If Judas had considered your desire to forgive, he could never have lost hope. Far from me such an unhappiness. I know your mercy is infinite, and that it is your favourite attribute, and your delight is to exercise it. You even died to redeem me, and purchase me a pardon. I will then knock at the door of your loving merciful heart, and say: Consider not the provocations of my malice, but your ordinary mercy. You came and suffered death to save sinners. Save me then.

V. 8. David foretold your plentiful redemption of us from all our sins. I see it accomplished. Let me not perish after being so wonderfully redeemed. O God, having given your Son a propitiation for me, look on that agreeable victim, and pardon me.

A PURPOSE OF SATISFACTION FOR SIN, BY A PENITENTIAL LIFE, IN THE FORM OF AN APPEAL FROM THE TRIBUNAL OF GOD'S JUSTICE TO THAT OF HIS MERCY. FROM GERSON, T. 3, P. 700.

"I the most ungrateful of all God's children, unworthy to bear that sacred name, the most poor in all merits, and the most full in sin, prostrate myself before the throne of his adorable Majesty, with a firm resolution to punish my crimes in myself, that I may avert his just vengeance, which I deserve. I see your infinite justice, O Lord, armed against me, and the torments of hell prepared for me. I remember the sins by which I have insulted thy grace, despised thy law, trampled upon, and profaned thy precious blood, and after repentance again returned to the vomit, with perfect knowledge, and a thousand circumstances aggravating the malice of my guilt. I am fallen into the hands of the living God, and separated from the society of the saints. Yet you, O powerful great King, terrible revenger and just Judge, have borne me with patience, and expected my return that you might have mercy on me. I have prolonged my iniquity, and you have continued your mercy, dissembling my treasons, crimes, and ingratitudes, and not dealing with me according to my offences, but suspending by your mercy the execution of the sentence I have long ago incurred. It is only through your clemency, that I do not feel, and for eternity, the torments of the never-dying worm, the piercing flames of

hell, and the loss of your enjoyment and of my heavenly inheritance. If you were now to mount your tribunal to sit upon me, I should faint away with fear. Lord, what would my lot be? O just Judge, by this bond written with tears, I beseech you to receive my earnest supplication, and humbly make an appeal from the tribunal of your justice to that of your mercy. I intreat you, O queen of mercy, and refuge of sinners, and all ye saints and blessed spirits, earnestly to intercede for me. Again, O God, who art rich in mercy, whose mercies have filled the earth, and surpass all your other works, and who has promised mercy to all sinners that shall sigh and repent sincerely, I again and again beg that you grant me mercy and pardon. I firmly purpose, by your assistance, to correct my life, avoid all occasions and dangers of sin, and labour to satisfy your justice by penitential works. And I will often renew afresh this my resolution, that I may the more vigorously put it in execution, with constancy and unwearied perseverance. I, from my heart, remit all injuries, and forgive all my enemies, begging that you mercifully forgive me my immense debts, according to your word. O crucified Son of God, who, on your cross, 'were heard for your reverence,' when you prayed for us, offer your prayer and passion to your Father for me, to appease his indignation, and disarm his justice. May I find mercy through your sacred wounds and death."

THE SOUL MAY REPRESENT TO HERSELF GOD RECEIVING HER APPEAL, AND RETURNING AN ANSWER TO THIS PURPORT.

"By my clemency I allow and admit your appeal, and refer your cause to the tribunal of my mercy, assigning for your peremptory obligation to prosecute here and make good your cause, by a penitential course, all the remaining days of your life; and I propitiously suspend the sentence of my justice pronounced against you, but upon this condition, that you labour in acquitting the debts with which you stand charged to me."

The protestation of the soul, recommended by St. Francis of Sales, is an excellent purpose of amendment of life. See "Garden of the Soul," p. 237. Gerson testifies that he found it of singular efficacy to oblige penitents, especially young persons, firmly to promise to him, by a renovation of their baptismal engagements, not to return to such a sin or any other again. 1. de Remed. contra peccat.

A SHORT ACT OF CONTRITION FOR A SOUL ALREADY SUFFICIENTLY MOVED TO COMPUNCTION.

O God of infinite goodness! I, a vile worm, have insulted your tremendous Majesty, despised your love, abused your inestimable benefits, and violated your sacred laws, yet you love me still, and invite me to return to you. I am pierced to the heart with the most bitter sorrow for having ever offended you, because you are infinitely good; I detest sin above all other evils, and am firmly resolved, by your grace, to avoid all sin, and all occasions of it, especially N. N. those which seem more dangerous to me.

ANOTHER.

O dearest crucified Redeemer! it grieves me most bitterly that I have ever injured you. I hate and detest sin, the sovereign evil, with a sovereign abhorrence. Ah! unite my sorrow with your divine grief in the garden; touch my hard heart, make my eyes stream in floods of tears, and

wash my soul in your precious blood, which alone is able to wipe away its stains. Strengthen me by your grace, that I never more may offend you; and preserve me from all dangers, which I will shun with the utmost care and dread.

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

ON TRUE AND FALSE CONTRITION.

"*And he held her hand, and the maid arose.*" Mat. ix. 25.

As this corpse, stretched ghastly on a bier, deprived of all beauty, sense, or motion, sets before our eyes a lively image of a soul in the frightful state of mortal sin, bereaved of sanctifying grace, and become its own grave; so this carcase being raised to life by the Almighty hand of our Redeemer, is a true emblem of a soul restored to the life of grace by repentance. And from a slave of the devil, a child of hell, to be made an heir of heaven, and the adopted son of God, is a far greater work, a miracle far more astonishing to the angels and blessed spirits, than for God to create the universe. "It is a greater work to make a just man of a sinner than to create heaven and earth." St. Aug. Serm. 72, in Joan. By his only word, by the simple act of his will, he produced the world out of nothing, and could with equal ease have created a million of worlds infinitely more perfect; but the remission of one sin, the redemption of one sinner, was to be purchased only by the last drop of his precious blood. Yet repentance is now regarded as a sure and easy work; we see the churches daily filled with pretenders to it, and certainly, did but men generally repent as sincerely as they flatter themselves, the church at present would be most happy and fertile in saints, far above the primitive ages of fervour; the way to heaven would be no longer strait, nor the gate narrow; scarcely any one would run wilfully into eternal flames, as there are almost none who do not pretend to some degree of penance. But do all rise from sin whom we see frequent the tribunal of confession? Is it not in many a false peace, which only betrays them blindfold into hell, and not a true conversion? This we cannot but be convinced of, not merely from the tears and complaints of the zealous pastors of God's church, but by daily experience, when we see such great tepidity, so supine an indifference reign among Christians, notwithstanding the frequent use of the sacraments; when we see confessions openly followed by no amendment, but often, perhaps, by greater relapses, and persons always pretending to a fresh conversion, yet always falling back into their sins. What judgment can we frame from hence, but that in general true conversions are very rare, and, as the prophet complains of the obstinate Jews, like the few grapes left after a careful gleaning; and that these pretended repentances only fill the church with horrible profanations, and crowd hell with Christian souls? "Therefore has hell dilated its soul, and has opened its mouth without measure." I hope the favourable circumstances in which God's singular mercy has placed you, and a happy ignorance of vice, that securest fence against it and best guardian of virtue, may remove you from

the dreadful precipice, at least as to mortal sins: but is there no danger of falling into it by a neglect of the venial faults we pretend to repent of? Besides, lest the bias of our passions and the torrent of the world lead us into this fatal snare, it is necessary to be apprized of it. For this effect I shall endeavour, first, to show that penance which is followed by a speedy relapse is not sincere, and highly pernicious; and, secondly, to explain the sentiments of the fathers on this subject. Hail Mary.

It is a truth of the highest evidence, clear from reason as well as from the plainest revelation, that without a true sorrow and contrition of the heart for sin committed; without a sincere detestation of whatever grievously offends God as of the greatest of all evils, and an effectual resolution of avoiding it and the occasions of it, at any rate, there can be no such thing as forgiveness, no such thing as repentance. This, when perfect, may supply the want of the sacrament when it cannot be had. Confession, absolution, actual performance of satisfactory works, may be dispensed with when impossible; but from hearty contrition no case of necessity, no plea of inculpable ignorance, no impossibility can ever exempt, nor can sin be ever remitted without it by any power whatever. If this disposition be wanting in the penitent, all the absolutions and indulgences, given by the fullest power that Christ has left to his church, can never in the least avail; for will God pardon a soul whilst it continues averse from him, and obstinately refuses to place its last end in him, but fixes it in mortal sin? No, dear Christians, without contrition all the holy sacraments together, all the adorable blood of Jesus poured forth for the remission of sins, all the power in heaven and earth can never remove one mortal sin; and whoever pretends to repent of any sin without this essential disposition most grievously deceives himself, insults the church, mocks God, and profanes the most sacred of mysteries and the adorable blood of Christ contained in the sacraments. "This motion of contrition was at all times necessary to obtain the remission of sins." Conc. Trid. Sess. 4, c. 4. Now, is it possible, that one who after confession returns to the vomit almost on the first occasion, who commits, perhaps before the end of the week, what he pretends to repent for on the Sunday, and whose whole life is made up of pretended penances and as frequent relapses, should ever detest sin as the greatest of evils? This detestation can never be sincere and sovereign; this conversion can never be true, until with great labour it forms an entirely new creature. The will must be quite changed; the affections must be removed and separated from their darling objects, and fixed on the opposites; the soul must die to what she most of all loved; in a word, the sinner must, as if he had changed his nature, become another man. "He must lay aside his old conversation, and put off the old man, which he must crucify with all his acts and desires, to be renewed in spirit, and to put on the new man, who was created according to God." Ephes. iv. 23, 24; Rom. vi. 4, 5, 6. Thus, to repent sincerely, the body of sin must be destroyed, so that the soul never more submit to its slavery; "that the body of sin be destroyed, and we no longer serve sin." The man must die to all his former passions, and rise again as from the grave another creature, to walk in the newness of life. Nor is he justified from sin till he is thus buried to it, and risen again; risen, I say, with Christ, to die no more This is the idea St. Paul gives us, in express terms, of all true repentance. And no one certainly can imagine that a person thus changed, can ever on a sudden fall back into sin; for the same will, alternately to abhor the same thing

with a sovereign hatred, and again so soon to embrace it, is certainly as plain a contradiction as for it sovereignly to love and hate the same object at the same time. The works of God are strong and effectual. He raised not Lazarus from the grave to die immediately again. His cures of the sick and lame were not for an instant, but to be true and to endure. So, when by his grace he justifies a sinner, he makes his conversion not temporary, but able to stand proof against violent attacks. It is a solid and permanent work; an edifice not built on sand; but on a rock, that will bear up against winds and storms. An instant can never overthrow what grace and virtue have raised with infinite pains. An habit of grace is not floating and inconstant; it is settled in firm and lasting dispositions. The heart must be quite changed again before a fall, which cannot be done by every sudden motion. I pretend not that the grace of the sacrament frees a man from temptation or renders him impeccable, nor that whoever after confession has the misfortune to fall again into mortal sin must have necessarily profaned the sacrament; but this I advance, if a person easily relapse again, and in a short time—if by former occasions, by ordinary temptations—if he fall without having for some time employed all means against the enemy, without having first experienced many violent conflicts, having made strong resistance and used great efforts, without having struggled earnestly and maintained his ground a considerable time, then it is plain, that his repentance could never have been true. Grace must have been weakened by degrees, a thousand dangers neglected, a thousand smaller infidelities must have paved the way to the fatal precipice. The state of reprobation is not so near a true conversion, the gulf of mortal sin follows not so close on the grace of justification. You will say, our nature is frail; that a man is not the same in a violent temptation as when in the fervour of compunction, so that at the foot of the altar, during a fervent meditation, he may truly detest sin, yet easily embrace it at another time. But whoever frames this objection shows plainly that he takes ineffectual notions of grace for a thorough conversion. Were the change of heart perfect, he would most certainly labour to foresee and provide against all dangers. Would you ever be persuaded that a man was in the pursuit of some affair, as if his entire happiness depended upon it, if he studied not the means by which it might be compassed, and endeavoured not to discover and ward off the dangers and prevent unlucky accidents? Or, should a merchant send out a vessel in a dangerous sea without a fit seaman to govern it at the helm, would you think he truly desired that the persons on board should arrive safe? In this parallel the odds are on my side, as the dangers and necessity are infinitely greater. If, then, a person relapse shortly by occasions, which ought to have been seen or prevented, or by ordinary temptations, for want of having armed himself against them, it is most evident that he has not taken the precautions necessary, and, consequently, had no true contrition, no effectual desire to avoid sin as the greatest of all evils. Many flatter themselves that they alone can sound their own hearts and judge of their own secret dispositions; but, of all persons in the world, they are often the most incapable for this purpose. The bias of their passions sways them, immoderate self-love blinds them, and some faint desires and resolutions of amendment deceive them, so that they mistake these for a thorough change and conversion. We see, in the example of St. Augustin, that a sinner may, nay usually has very strong velleities long before his heart is completely changed. But he says, he is sure his final resolution is taken: "Believe

him not. I do not say he tells a lie; he believes what he says." Seneca, ep. 112, ad Lucilium. He says he has now an entire aversion for his past life. I believe him; for who can but detest and hate it? "Men both love and hate their lives." Let him, then, excuse us from pronouncing him sincere, till by a change of life, he shall have convinced both himself and us of it. Thus, then, you see it is by the effects alone—by the amendment of his life alone that a sinner can prove the sincerity of his conversion either to himself or to others. To himself I say; because it is by this alone he can distinguish effectual resolutions from faint desires or wishes; to others, because all other signs of a conversion are generally equivocal. The same words and protestations are common to the greatest penitents and to the most hardened sinners. Saul used as strong expressions as King David did to Nathan; consequently these can be no certain mark. Tears, also, and sighs are very treacherous and deceitful; they may often proceed more from some human motive, or a natural tenderness of constitution, than from a true conversion. Who would not have been convinced by the lamentable sighs of Saul, Esau, and Antiochus, for their sins, which yet touched not the heart of God? We have, then, no other certain rule to judge of our own or others' conversion than this laid down by our Redeemer himself: "By their fruits ye shall know them." For what end, then, do sinners in the world frequently importune the priest for absolution before they have put their conversion to the test, or perhaps, when they find this mark evidently to fail them? What madness is it so earnestly to sue for what will be your mortal poison? O excess of madness! Such an absolution can only blind you with a false peace, and precipitate you and your blind guide into hell. "If the blind lead the blind," &c. Penance is indeed a tribunal of mercy; but of God's, not of man's. An inferior and subaltern judge can proceed only according to the will of the sovereign, who is God, and who alone can prescribe or dispense with his conditions. Then only is our sentence profitable, when it is ratified in the supreme court of heaven. St. Greg. "O excess of madness! You are angry with him who strives to avert the wrath of God; you threaten him who endeavours to draw down the mercy of God upon you, who is a better judge of your wound than you can pretend to be, who sheds tears for you while your eyes remain dry." But let us examine, in a word or two, what were the sentiments on this point of those great saints and doctors of the church who were raised by God, and particularly inspired by him, to conduct the souls which he had redeemed with his precious blood, through the path of true penance. These holy men were chosen by Almighty God to deliver down to us, by their mouths and pens, the faith which he was pleased himself to teach us, and the rules of Christian morality and penance. We cannot receive their faith, and reject their morality.

A large treatise would not suffice, to copy out all that the fathers have written relating to the subject we are treating of. As the principal end of the preaching of the gospel was to announce to all men to do penance, so there is no point on which they exercise their zeal with greater energy. I shall content myself with two short remarks on their practice and doctrine. First, so cautious were they not to expose our adorable mysteries to the profanation of sinners, or to "give holy things to dogs," that if any one, after having once performed public penance, (which was enjoined for all sins whatsoever against the sixth commandment, and most other mortal

sins) had the misfortune to fall again, he was never after to be admitted to it a second time; but remained excluded from the participation of the sacraments till death. Tert. Amb. Pac. Cypr. &c. The reason they universally give for it is; he, that relapses after penance, could never ordinarily have the dispositions of a true penitent; for to rise and to fall again "is not doing penance, but a criminal hypocrisy."[a] Hence St. Isidore, l. de summo bono, c. 16, and from him the body of the canon law, Dist. 3, de pœnit. cap. Irrisor: "He is a false penitent, who lives as if he never repented. He does not approach the tribunal of mercy as a supplicant, but mocks his Judge. The penitent, who relapses into sin, is like the dog that returns to the vomit. The sinner who bewails, but repeats his former transgressions, may be said to be washed; but he is not cleansed."

My second observation is; they so much feared being imposed upon by false penitents, that they never admitted any one to his first penance, even after one mortal sin, till after a long trial and all possible marks of sincerity. They would have them beg long and earnestly, "to throw themselves at the feet of the priests, to kneel down before the friends of God, and recommend themselves to the prayers of the faithful." Tertull. de pœnit. c. 9. And St. Ambrose de pœnit. c. 16: "Let the sinner hope for forgiveness, let him pray for it with tears, let him employ the supplications of the people to obtain it; and, if his absolution be deferred even a second and third time, let him persuade himself that he has not prayed as he ought." And again, l. 2, c. 9: "Some," says he, "ask penance so as to be immediately admitted to the communion; these seek not to disburden their own consciences; but only to charge the priest and make him partner in their crimes." This holy father writing against the Novatians, who denied, that fornication and several other sins could be forgiven by the keys of the church, learnedly refutes that abominable heresy; but in such a manner, that he would now-a-days be condemned by many as a very great rigorist. Yet, he has one sentence, which terrifies me above all the rest: "It is easier to find a person, who has preserved his innocence, than one who has sincerely repented."[b] l. 2, c. 10. He lived in an age, indeed, in which several were not baptised till somewhat advanced in years, but in which every particular church abounded with conspicuous examples of astonishing penitents, of which he himself gives us frequent surprising instances; whose austerities seem to have surpassed those of the most rigorous religious orders, who furrowed their cheeks with continual floods of tears, fasted on bread and water, lay on the bare ground, interdicted themselves all public or private merriments and diversions, watched in penitential garments at the church door, prostrating themselves at the feet of all who entered, begging their prayers at the foot of the altar, to which they considered themselves unworthy to be admitted. Yet amongst these conspicuous examples does this saint, eminent among all the fathers for his extreme mildness towards sinners, break into this dreadful sentence; for the reason of which he adds, that, for a sinner to repent, he must totally die to what he was, put on new affections, become a new creature, and be transformed into another man,

[a] Hoc non est agere pœnitentiam, sed fingere.

[b] Facilius inveni qui innocentiam servaverint, quam qui congrue egerint pœnitentiam.

"that he be totally changed."[a] Like a young man, who, having been engaged in a criminal conversation, repented and went into a foreign country, that, free from the occasions, he might labour to extirpate his sinful passion, afterwards returning home he met his mistress a first and a second time, but saluted her not. She, surprized, thought he did not know her, and said; I am such a one; but he answered, "I am not such a one;" meaning that he was no longer the same man, but had now other thoughts, other views, and other affections. Now, to admit sinners to communion, before this thorough change be wrought in their souls, is to betray them into hell under the appearance of peace. This, St. Cyprian (de laps.) complains of as of greater danger, and a more pernicious evil in the church, than all the political and cruel inventions of persecutors. He calls it "a new misfortune, a delusive false peace," contrary to the law of God and the tenor of the gospel; which is not a peace, but a war; which restores not lost grace or peace, but destroys all the means, by which it might be obtained. (Cap. 31, Pam. 30, Felli.) The clergy of Rome, and St. Cyprian with them, say, that is not to heal, but in truth to destroy outright. Thus, you see that the devil, from the beginning of the church, always employed this engine with great success; and we frequently meet with penitentials abolished for pretending to dispense men from the laws of the gospel in doing penance. But in these our latter ages the locusts of the Apocalypse are broke loose in swarms, and labour to enervate every branch of Christian morality; and by this means ruin thousands of souls hitherto triumphant over the attempts of heresy and schism. As this fatal abuse flatters men's passions, and allows them a licentious sway, in spite of zeal and example it stands its ground, is proof against virtue, and continues its havoc. The fathers feared that if discipline were relaxed, impunity would increase offences. "An easy pardon produces a frequency of sin." St. Ambr. in Ps. 118. What they justly dreaded we see unhappily fulfilled. And does it not happen, that men indulge their passions without remorse, thinking that all will be remitted with an hour's easy task? So truly is that saying of St. Augustin verified, (Serm. 35, de div.) "If justification were easily recovered, it would be mere sport for a man to fall by sin into death."[b]

From the purport of this discourse we may gather these three corollaries.

First, If any one having confessed a mortal sin, falls again in a short time without any strong endeavours, and by ordinary temptations, it is plain he had no contrition, and made no valid confession.

Secondly, Those who confess venial sins, and continue in them as much as ever after the sacrament, must also have been guilty of a sacrilege, for want of necessary contrition, if these were the whole matter of the confession.

Thirdly, Though it be a commendable practice in ordinary confessions for persons to add, besides the smaller imperfections, some more considerable sin of their life past, of which they have the greatest remorse, and for which they may be more secure of their contrition, yet it is a great abuse, and of very pernicious consequence, to neglect in the contrition the present failings of their life:

[a] Ut totus immutetur.

[b] Si cito rediret homo ad pristinam beatitudinem, ludus illi esset peccato cadere in mortem.

Because this tepid negligent disposition, will perhaps, in a short time, extend itself to the other sins of their life past, committed long ago, often confessed, and so little reflected on. And because the chief end of this sacrament is the amendment of the present life, in which not always to advance is the beginning of the road to a fatal precipice.

As often then, as we frequent the sacrament of penance, let us renew our sorrows for the sins of our life past; let our hearts bleed afresh for them; let our contrition for them be every time more and more perfect, as by length of time we ought to have advanced more in charity and virtue. Let us also detest all smaller imperfections as fully as possible. With what floods of tears did the saints daily wash away their slightest failings of surprize and inadvertence! In a word, let us never forget to take time and the necessary means to excite in our souls, a true and perfect contrition for all our offences, though ever so small; and to form such effectual resolutions, that we may say, "It is time that sin should yield, and iniquity be destroyed;" Dan. ix. 24, not with a half will. "We must will strongly and universally, we must no longer fluctuate between vice and virtue;" (St. Aug. l. 8, conf. c. 8,) nor with the faint desire of the lazy; "the slothful man wills and wills not;" (Prov. xiii.) but with such a will as may always answer the enemy; "I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I can do no otherwise." Jud. ii. 35. Pray earnestly that God may always preserve this resolution in its fervour. "O Lord God, grant that I may persevere unto the end in this will." 1 Par. xxix. 18. Foresee and take all possible precautions to avoid the least occasion. Rely not on your own strength against them. A man placed in them is quite another from what he is at his prayers. Adam fell in paradise by company; David by an accidental occasion; the prince of the apostles, though he dearly loved his divine Master, at the voice of a silly maid. Fly from every shadow of danger, every appearance of evil, as from a precipice, or the face of a serpent. Eccl. xxi. If we frequented often in this manner the tribunal of penance, what victory should we not daily gain? How soon should we not be perfect in the performance of even the smallest action? How should we daily run from virtue to virtue, till we shall see God, and be seen in Sion, from whom we shall receive the plentiful reward of our small labours, the glorious crown of our short conflicts, &c?

DISCOURSE XXIX.

ON EXTERIOR WORKS OF PENANCE OR SATISFACTION.

1. THOUGH the essence of penance consists in the interior, or contrition of the heart, without which all exterior austerities are but counterfeit or mere shadows, and, as it were, a body without a soul, yet the interior alone does not constitute the whole of this virtue, which also requires exterior works, as its fruit and essential complement. Penance or the practice of it is scarcely ever named in holy scripture, without express mention of exterior austerities as making up a part of it; for example,

fasting, sackcloth, ashes, &c. This we find in the repentance of the Ninevites, in that of David, in that of the Jews, as often as they pretended to return from sin to God. This Almighty God and his prophets every where enjoin and exhort true penitents to. Thus Daniel gave that counsel to Nabuchodonosor: "Redĕem thy sins with alms." Dan. iv. 24. The heretics, who confine penance to the interior alone, excluding all works of satisfaction, invent a new kind of it, entirely unknown in scripture and to the ancient penitents. Those Catholics who totally neglect the practice of the exterior, adopt that maxim in their conduct, which they condemn in their faith.

2. God could remit all sin, without requiring any satisfaction, as he does in baptism, by which all sins committed before it are so blotted out, that there remains no satisfaction due for them, nor any temporal punishment, as has been the constant tradition of the church. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Rom viii. 1. But the perfidiousness and sacrilege of those who relapse, after having received the inestimable benefit of sanctifying grace, makes the case of such sinners very different. God mercifully admits them again to a free pardon, upon their sincere repentance; but on this condition, that, by a voluntary chastising of sin in themselves, they make some atonement to his injured justice; in which, if they are too slothful, he reserves to himself to inflict on them some temporal punishment either in this life, or in purgatory in the world to come. This article of our faith is clear, from the perpetual practice and tradition of the church, from the very idea of penance, which is given us in the holy scripture, and from the clearest examples and passages contained in it. This we see in David. His sin is declared to be forgiven him: 2 Kings, xxii. 13. Yet the prophet adds in the same place, that it should be punished with the death of the child, and that on its account blood should not depart from his house, ib. v. 10. Nor could his tears avert the execution of the threat. Again, after his sin for numbering his people was forgiven him, the choice of a punishment was left to him; whether war, famine, or pestilence. 2 Kings xxiv. Also, the murmuring of the Israelites in the desert was pardoned them, (Num. xiv. 20,) yet God adds in the very same place, that on account of it all of them should die in the wilderness, except Josue and Caleb. Moses and Aaron were certainly received into God's favour, after their sin for not glorifying God at the rock; nevertheless, both are condemned to die, without seeing the land of promise, on account thereof; as we read of Aaron (Numb. xx. 24,) and of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 1. A prophet was killed by a lion, on his journey, in punishment of an act of disobedience, who is however described as a saint, and his death as precious in the sight of God. 3 Kings xiii.

3. All the satisfaction of creatures could never expiate any one sin. Christ alone could repair the injury it offered to God. This he did by a superabundant satisfaction for us. All remission of sin, or of any punishment due to it, is a gratuitous mercy of God's pure grace, and the fruit of Christ's sacred passion. Still, it requires certain conditions on our side, such as a sincere repentance and contrition, and also some satisfaction. It belongs to the giver of a grace or favour to prescribe the conditions, under which he bestows it, as God is pleased to do in penance. This hinders not the pardon from being a purely gratuitous mercy, as our satisfaction is no ways adequate towards compensating the injury of sin; nor would it be of any virtue, unless by God's gracious acceptance, the promise

of which is purely gratuitous; nor is it any ways derogatory to the merits of Christ, as it is not required to supply a deficiency in them, which are infinite and superabundant, but as a condition stipulated before this fruit of them should be imparted to a sinner. Christ did not so suffer for him, as that he should be wholly exempt from doing any thing for himself. He will have him to undergo some voluntary chastisement on his side; which yet does not efface any of the sin by itself, it being no more than a condition, upon which the merits of Christ's blood are communicated to us, without which there can be no remission. Of this satisfaction St. Paul says, (1 Cor. ix, 37,) "I fulfil those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh." I adore your mercy, O God, in thus raising us by the merits of your Son's sacred passion imparted to us, and accepting our low endeavours for the acquitting of our immense debts. And I acknowledge, as your holy church teaches me, that in your merciful pardon for sin committed after baptism you require of us a voluntary chastisement of our offences in ourselves, as a reparation of the injury done to you, a true satisfaction to your justice, and a redemption of the temporal punishment due to sin, after its guilt is remitted, which remission is granted only on these terms.

By this conduct of Almighty God in holy penance, we admire both justice and mercy tempered together. We learn the difference of sins committed after holy baptism. We also see the difference between the sacraments of baptism and penance. The first, being a regeneration, is more easy: the latter, being a restoration after a relapse, operates by medicinal adustions, incisions, and bitter remedies. The fathers frequently repeat another reason of this greater severity in penance, lest, if the remedy were too light, men should more easily return to sin.

4. The works of satisfaction are; 1. Contrition of heart, which, as it is an affliction of the mind and something penal, is satisfactory. It is the doctrine of divines, that this may be so perfect and fervent, as to suffice alone to remit all the temporal punishment due to sin, together with its guilt. 2. Prayer and sacrifice. 3. Fasting and chastisement of the flesh. 4. Alms-deeds. Innumerable passages of scripture and fathers might be produced for each of these; as Tob. iv. 11: "Alms deliver from all sin and death." Prov. xvi. 6. "Iniquity is redeemed by mercy and truth," &c. St. Augustin observes that, "under fasting is comprised all chastisement of the body; under alms, benevolence and beneficence in giving and forgiving; under prayer, all the rules of holy desires." De perf. Justit. t. 10, p. 174.

Penance is practised not only by austerities; but also by denying ourselves even any innocent pleasures. If we are too cowardly to seek these crosses, let us at least not reject those, which God sends us, and which we receive every day from heat, cold, disappointments, contradictions, afflictions, &c. Let us cheerfully accept those in patience, with a desire to glorify God by them, by satisfying his holy justice, and destroying in our souls all the traces of sin. What goodness in our Judge, that he is pleased to accept for our sins, pains which we cannot avoid, even those to which this miserable life necessarily subjects us! What cowardice in us, if we neglect to pay our debts at so cheap a rate, and choose obstinately to reserve them for the rigour of God's justice! It is a cruelty to ourselves to neglect to redeem by light satisfactions what will otherwise cost us most dear.

5. Pretended penitents extol the efficacy and merit of interior penance,

so as to deny, in a great measure, the necessity and advantages of the exterior, to exempt themselves from its laborious exercise, by which the life of a Christian ought to be a continued lingering martyrdom of penance, as it is usually styled by the masters of a spiritual life. How do these accumulate debts, that are to be most severely exacted to the last farthing? Again, do not such persons generally deceive themselves as to the sincerity of their contrition? Certainly, we have the greatest reason to fear it: for an act of contrition cannot be sincere without a firm purpose of satisfying for sin by a penitential course. If this were not at least virtually included in it, the repentance was only counterfeit, as this purpose of satisfaction is an essential part of it. It is expressed in its definition by most divines. The scripture and councils mention it as a requisite ingredient. Now, if a penitent have this real desire and purpose, will he not carry it into execution, according to the circumstances of his state and opportunities? A true spirit of penance will find occasions continually, and cannot fail often to lay hold of them. A particular ardour in this duty is required in the penitential times ordained by the church, and in sinners upon their first conversion, as they stand in need of this remedy in a special manner, to expiate their offences, and to strengthen themselves in their yet weak spiritual state.

6. It is from the fathers, those channels through which our faith was conveyed down to us, and by whom its genuine practice was faithfully cultivated, that we are to learn the true maxims of penance. They have left us entire excellent books on this subject. One or two passages from them may suffice, which will express the drift of their whole works. Tertullian, the most ancient of the Latins, of whom we have many large works, in his book on penance, c. 10, p. 127, writes thus: "Penance is the discipline of protestation and humiliation, prescribing a conversation proper to draw down mercy, giving precepts even as to dress and tables, to lie on sackcloth and ashes, to clothe the body meanly and sordidly, to afflict the mind with sorrow, and to change the delights of sin into grief; to live only on bread and water, to nourish by fasts and frequent prayer, to sigh, weep, and howl to God day and night, to cast themselves at the feet of the priests, and fall on their knees to the servants of God, and to conjure all the brethren by their prayers to become intercessors to God in their behalf. Penance pronounces sentence against the sinner for the justice and indignation of God, and by a temporal affliction not so properly averts as perfectly overcomes eternal torments. As much as you shall not have spared yourself, be persuaded that God will so much the more spare you." C. 11, p. 128. He complains, that some dread penance on account of its austerities. He asks these, if a life of ease and vanity can ever satisfy for sin? Penitents must use all contrary severities, and answer to those, that shall ask them the reason or invite them to mirth: "I have sinned against God, and am in danger of perishing everlastingly; therefore I am now anxious and tortured in mind, and macerate my body to reconcile God to me, whom I have offended by sinning." He bids them see what heathens undergo for the world, and reflect on hell, which penance will extinguish: on the consideration of its grievous torments, no one can startle at the remedy.

St. Cyprian says, (Tr. de lapis, p. 96,) "Let us appease his anger and displeasure by fasting, weeping, and mourning, as he admonishes us." And p. 98, ib.: "It is necessary for penitents to pray more earnestly, to

pass the day in mourning, and the night in watching and weeping, spending all their time in tears and lamentations: to have no beds but ashes, no clothing but haircloth and poor mourning weeds: after having cast off the garments of Christ to wear no worldly garments; after feeding with devils to choose fasting; earnestly to employ themselves in good works, by which sins are cleansed; to give frequent alms, by which souls may be delivered from death. Does she mourn, who still puts on costly apparel?" &c.

St. Ambrose, l. 2, de pœnit. p. 417, writes thus: "I have more easily found such as have preserved innocence than such as have done due penance. The world is to be renounced, sleep to be shorter than nature usually requires; it is to be abridged by sighs, to be broken by groans, its time set apart for prayer; such a life is to be led as may be a dying to all the enjoyments of life, that a man deny himself and be all changed." And again, l. de laps. virg. p. 314: "You are to extinguish in yourself all care of this life, thinking only how to recover your spiritual life. Put on poor mourning weeds, punish your will and every member with a due chastisement. Let your face grow pale; your eyes always stand in tears; your whole body be macerated with fastings, and covered with haircloth and ashes, and your heart melt within you by compunction," &c. And on the 37th Psalm, p. 820: "He, who does penance, ought to be ready to bear injuries, and not be moved if he hear himself reproached with his crime. For, as he accuses himself, how will he not bear another accusing him? He is to offer himself to punishment, to be here chastised by our Lord, and not spared for eternal torments. He ought to meet the divine indignation."

St. Pacian, one of the most elegant and learned fathers of the fourth century, defines thus what it is to do penance: (Parænesis ad pœnit. p. 317,) "To weep in the sight of the church, to go meanly clad, to fast, pray, prostrate himself: if any one call to the bagnio, to refuse delights: if any one invite to a feast, to say: Such things are for happy souls, which have never sinned; I have offended the Lord, and am in danger of perishing everlastingly. What have I to do with banquets, who have injured the Lord? Moreover, to take hold of the hands of the poor, intreat the widows, fall down at the feet of the priests, beg the whole church to employ themselves in prayers for him, and to try all means not to be eternally lost."

7. In external penitential austerities, the greatest care is to be taken that they be accompanied with the most fervent inward spirit possible; as this alone gives them all their merit. The penitential soul, seeing her infinitely holy God hating and persecuting sin as the enemy of his glory, enters into sentiments conformable to his, conceives the most sovereign hatred possible of this evil, and the most sincere desire utterly to destroy that object of his abomination, and prevent his justice by revenging on herself the injuries, by which she had dishonoured him.

Is any thing more honourable or more just than thus to act in concert with the divine justice in the destruction of sin, than for the sinner to punish his own offences in himself? Such a satisfaction is so much the more honourable to God, as free choice in works intended for his glory honours him more than a suffering by constraint; and as it is voluntarily undertaken out of the motive of his holy love, and in conformity with his divine justice.

8. The sinner enters upon the exercise of penance with an ardent desire to discharge the debts he has contracted to Almighty God. A just man is always anxious speedily to satisfy all his creditors, and would never die without having paid off all his debts, when he has it in his power to do it. This ought to be much more so in what we owe to our God, our Creator, infinite Benefactor, sovereign happiness, and last end. It is always an obstacle to perfect friendship to owe any thing to a friend, except that debt or obligation of still loving him, which can never be exhausted. Rom. xiii. 8.

Our own interest also ought to oblige us to this. If reserving debts only to pay by force is immensely to increase our accounts, "it is a new offence to have sinned, and not to satisfy; to have injured God, and not to weep for the injury;" as St. Cyprian writes, (de laps.) The voluntary chastisement of sin in ourselves, with the merit of patience and virtue, through the sacred merits of Christ, is far more light and easy than that of another world. Which do I choose? I must renounce my reason if I say the latter, and my faith if I deny both. "All iniquity, whether it be great or small," says St. Augustin, (Serm. 11, pa. 58, n. 18, t. 4, p. 565,) "must necessarily be punished either by the man penitent, or by an avenging God: for he who repents truly will chastise himself. Absolutely either you punish yourself, or he punishes. Would you that he should not punish? then punish yourself." He repeats the same in several other sermons, as in the 19th, 20th, &c.

St. John Climacus relates, (Gr. 4, c. 5,) that a certain monk, named Antiochus, went in this spirit to live in a very severe monastery under an exceedingly harsh superior. On the first night, in his sleep, he seemed to see certain severe persons, demanding of him a terrible account of one hundred pounds of gold. Awaking in the morning, he said to himself: "Poor Antiochus, we lie under a heavy debt, and have a great sum to pay off." After three years spent in great austerities, he saw ten pounds blotted out in the schedule of his debts. Alarmed and terrified, he redoubled still his fervour in penance, and, to suffer more, feigned himself foolish, bore with invincible patience and joy all manner of insult and ill-treatment, and made himself, as it were, the ass of the house, to carry the heaviest burdens of everybody. After thirteen years, he found his whole debt effaced.

9. The virtue of penance belongs to vindictive justice, which is employed in punishing crimes in proportion to their deserts; it is a species contained under it, as St. Thomas observes. The satisfaction, therefore, for sins must be greater, according to their heinousness and number. It is to follow the rule of the divine justice, in the place of which it substitutes itself to satisfy and prevent its more heavy severity. This the fathers frequently put penitents in mind of. "Let the greatness of your grief equal the enormity of your sins," says St. Cyprian, (de lapsis, p. 98.) "Let not a long and diligent remedy be wanting to a deep wound. Let not the penance be less than the crime." And St. Gregory the Great, quoted by St. Isidore, l. 2, sent. c. 13, p. 440: "He doeth penance worthily who laments his fall by a proportioned satisfaction, condemning himself the more severely as he has been more guilty." The stripes must be proportioned to the crime.

A penitent must, therefore, ascend the tribunal in his own soul against himself. And, as it is not enough in justice that a criminal be convicted

and condemned, but he is also to be executed, so, after having carefully examined, impartially accused and condemned his own criminal heart before God, he must inflict upon it, and its instrument or accomplice the flesh, a punishment sufficient to satisfy the inflexible justice of God. It belongs not to him to spare; that is only in the power of his sovereign, according to whose rules he is to pronounce upon himself; and let him lean to severity rather than to mildness, knowing "that God will the more spare him the more he shall not have spared himself," as Tertullian and St. Cyprian repeat. Christian penitents, says the former, always judge severely, being certain of the rigorous tribunal at which we are hereafter to be tried.

10. We must also love and embrace penance, to secure ourselves from present and future dangers. How can we complain that we are tempted violently, and that the flesh revolts, whilst we neglect the means to subdue it, and the means to which God has annexed his graces of victory? Let us animate ourselves against our body, which ought to be the slave of the soul, but which, by pampering and flattering, we make the master. Let us, in this holy hatred of so dangerous an enticer to evil, and in this holy spirit of penance, treat it severely; and we shall find its habits weakened and our soul strengthened. The great reason of souls making so little progress in perfection, and in mastering their passions, is their general aversion to the practice of penance and mortification.

11. Men, to exempt themselves from the practice of penitential works, call them works of supererogation, and allege their bitterness and the weakness of their own constitution. By these pretexts they deceive themselves, and, though they would pass for faithful Christians, live like professed enemies of penance and of the cross of Christ. The essential and nobler part is indeed the interior, but the exterior is also an indispensable part. Are not the precepts of the gospel most express and strong? In the lists of saints and true Christians, can I find one whose life was not a perpetual penance? Even those who were always preserved most pure from the corruption of any sin, like the Baptist, lived innocent martyrs of penance; nor could they, without its protection, have ever maintained their virtue, or obtained the graces they received. I have rebellious passions to subdue, a world and a Satan to fight against; penance is my armour. I am a Christian; consequently, by obligation, a penitent. I have also other reasons to rank myself in this class. I have sinned grievously. I cannot hope to be saved by the path of innocence; I must, then, walk in that of penance, and live by its laws, or I cannot hope for salvation.

12. Faint-hearted penitents are afraid of mortification because it is bitter. Penance must be so. The sinner offended by pleasure; this must be expiated by chastisement. Is it not a happiness to appease an offended God, and sheath the sword of his indignation? Is it not a false pity here to spare ourselves? If a man, out of a cowardly delicacy, dare not press a sore hard enough to cleanse it, and suffer it to grow worse, and perhaps turn to a gangrene, is not this an ill-placed tenderness? Or will not the surgeon who sees him, squeeze the ulcer more roughly? So will God prepare much more grievous chastisements for those who refuse to undertake sufficient penances. "He who is afraid of the hoar-frosts shall fall into the snow." Job vi. 16.

But, though penance be contrary to sensuality and to the corrupt in-

clinations of nature, yet true penitents find more real content in weeping for their sins, and mortifying their passions, than they ever did in gratifying them. A contrite heart finds a sweetness in tears as in its most delicious food. "Thou shalt feed us with the bread of tears." Ps. lxxix. Other mortifications also have peculiar sweetness in them, which a true penitent would not exchange for all the pleasures of the world. The solid hope of pardon and the recovery of God's friendship, with all its incomparable advantages, are sufficient to mitigate their rigour; and the unction of the Holy Ghost often makes them sweet. This St. Augustin testifies: "Tears themselves are sweet, and shall be as a delicious food." Enar. in Ps. 126. And again: "Behold thou art there in the heart of those, who confess to thee and weep in thy bosom; and thou mildly wipest away their tears, that they may weep more and rejoice in their weeping." Conf. l. 5, c. 11. Let others, then, fear penance who do not love it, who carry its yoke without its spirit; but to these its tears are like spring showers, which bring gaiety, joy, and plenty. For a true spirit of penance inspires a certain love of penitential works, as it excites an insatiable desire to destroy sin and its instruments, with all the obstacles of grace, to advance in charity, and resemble Christ covered with wounds for us, bearing the ensigns of penance in his holy body for our pattern.

13. Many excuse themselves on account of the weakness of their constitution. But these, so delicate and tender in penance, can often resist fire for the world, though they melt at the first beam of the sun for virtue. If it be for company, for play, for dancing, or some whim, diversion, or honour, they can watch, fast, fatigue themselves, or curb their passions, without so much as thinking of it; but to satisfy for sins, the least inconvenience or constraint to nature is insupportable, the least sickness of stomach is magnified as mortal, though it perhaps be only the wholesome effects of temperance. Excesses in austerities are, however, to be guarded against. To avoid this danger, let every one follow, in the choice of his course, the advice of a discreet director not apt to flatter. "For he that makes himself the master of his own spiritual conduct, makes himself the disciple of a mad governor," as St. Bernard says, ep. 87. The very renouncing of self-will in this choice will be the first advantage gained towards the end proposed in satisfaction.

Every one can bear, in a spirit of penance, the crosses and sufferings which God sends and those to which nature is subject. Every one can deny himself many satisfactions and worldly enjoyments. Every one can refuse his senses and inclinations in many things, saying to himself: I have offended God, and must appease his indignation by punishing my criminal flesh or heart. Let fasts, alms, and the like works be proportioned to every one's capacity and exigencies. Any impossibility in them may be made up other ways, at least by more frequent penitential aspirations and prayers. Every one must, in the first place, retrench occasions of sins: if he has offended by his tongue, his eyes, or ears, these must be restrained, &c. His heart must be more diligently watched; sloth and sensuality curbed. Every one must also laboriously employ himself in the occupations of his calling. For the rest, let no one flatter himself with groundless suggestions of self-love against other austerities.

Ah! it is not that penance is impracticable in my circumstances, but because I want courage and fervour to undertake it, that I am dismayed

at it. If I once resolutely enter upon it in a proper manner, I shall be surprised to see how vain my fears of it were. It is only the first commencement which seems severe to nature, not yet accustomed to its yoke, nor yet tasting its unction and sweetness.

How am I ashamed of my base cowardice and sloth when I look at the examples of innumerable holy penitents! I see thousands, young and old, sick and healthy, strong and weak, of all ages, sexes, and countries, walking cheerfully in the path of most austere penance, and shall I allege impossibilities? Not to speak of the many examples of distant ages, let me but visit the ladies of the Ave Maria in Paris, the desarts of Camaldoli, Septfons, Orval, &c., and I shall find enough to confound my delicacy. Can I do nothing, whilst I see many, more tender and weak, cheerfully doing so much!

14. Consider only the reformed Cistercians of la Trappe, a monastery in Perche, five leagues from Belesme, three from Mortagne, in the diocess of Séez, on the confines of Normandy, in a country the most nearly resembling the English climate and soil of any in France. The house is low-built,* in a square, mean, and without any ornaments except those in the church. It stands a league distant from the village, in the midst of a great forest, but has a middling cheap inn near it, for the convenience of such strangers as do not choose to live with the monks; for they should content themselves almost with their fare. In the year 1746, when I saw it, there were in this house 60 lay-brothers and 57 choir monks, of whom 18 were priests; for they promote none to orders after their admission among them. There were three oblaters, a sort of half lay-brothers, who can speak to one another or to strangers. One of these comes out to any stranger, falls down at his feet, conducts him into a chapel to say a prayer, and thence into a parlour or guest-room, in which hang rules which strangers are desired to observe there; particularly, that they mention nothing of news, and be very short in all their questions and words. Whoever they may be, the abbot or guest-master alone can speak to them or entertain them. These monks, before their profession, write to their friends in the world for the last time, to take their farewell and order their goods to be given to the poor; for they are not allowed to give anything to the monastery. After this, they can never more write to, or hear from any friend, not even a parent, or speak to him if he come to see them in the monastery, though the abbot usually gives them leave to show themselves before him. If any one's parent or other relation die, only the abbot receives the news of it, and he tells the religious, all together, that God has called to himself one of their fathers, brothers, &c., and bids them all pray for him; but no one hears whose it is. They never speak to any secular, not even a father, on any account whatsoever, nor ever hear of what passes in the world, whether it be in war or peace, what kings rule, &c., only, that the abbot usually recommends to their prayers the public affairs of the church or state, without giving them any detail. Only the abbot and master of novices know who are admitted into the house, or what belongs to them. They can never speak to one another, only by signs, except to their confessor or superior. They never contract any familiarities together. No one there is ever named but by his name in

* When the author wrote this work. Alas! what the haters of pure religion have done.—Ed.

religion, and they only know one another by sight at most, nor a great part of their house even so. A monk dying expressed to his abbot a great solicitude for a brother, thinking him yet in the world, though he had been many years a professed religious in the same house; and, for his satisfaction, he was ordered by his superior to show himself before him. They usually keep their eyes cast down on the ground, and only see those next to them, nor then but by their habit. They make a low reverence to strangers that pass by them; but never look up, or see any more of them than the lower part of the clothes. Walking in the refectory, I could not perceive any one that gave one glance of curiosity. This puts us in mind of Innocent the Third, one of the greatest Popes that ever governed the church, who, returning from the Emperor's court in the most magnificent state, and with the greatest attendance, visiting St. Bernard's monastery, observed that no one of the religious lifted up his eyes to see him or any of his train, so much were they dead to all curiosity, to their senses, and to whatsoever could dissipate their souls or interrupt their attention to God; which made him look upon this house as the miracle of the world. The recollection of the monks of la Trappe in the fields, at work, at meals, and in all their actions, is most moving; but, above all, in the church.

They do everything by obedience, and are not to take one step by their own choice. They are bound to obey, not only superiors; but also one another, by the least signs which the last lay-brother shall give them, though they by it may spoil all their work, as happened to one who by that means spoiled all their singing-books; for, as abbot John told the gardener, it were better they should be without herbs than have any plants of self-will. That abbot, walking with a bishop in the garden, ordered a religious, passing by without a reverence, because he did not see them, to fall prostrate: he obeying, lay so two hours, till the abbot returning that way found him still in that posture, and bade him rise. Another, in obedience, continued to discipline himself several hours, till others informed the abbot, who coming again found him all bloody, yet not ceasing, because he had not fixed a time. Hence, even to refuse any service offered by another passes for a great crime amongst them. The venerable abbot of Chatillon, being there only a visitant, going up to his cell, a monk offered to light him up stairs, to whom he made a sign of refusal out of humility on his side. Though he was a stranger, one of singular piety, and eighty years of age, abbot John next day summoned him to chapter, proclaimed his fault, and reproached him in this manner: "Is it possible that, after being abbot twenty-five years, you should not know the first rules of charity and the first principles of your order! You had little to do to quit your own house to ruin the discipline of ours. I recommend you to the prayers of the community, and enjoin you to wait kneeling at the church-door, when the religious pass thither after dinner."

They never say anything, even indirectly, in commendation of their house or order, to most persons a common topic of secret refined pride under a public name; for every individual appropriates to himself tacitly a share of such praise, and extols a house only because it is his own. They keep many little books of piety, to distribute among the poor, or sell cheap to the rich; but will never willingly show any wrote by those of their own house. They have no recreation, only an hour-and-an-half's work in the fields every morning and as much usually in the afternoon. On Sundays and holidays they spend this time in their cells or in walking alone. They have five hours allowed for rest in the night; but this is interrupted for

five hours from ten till three, or, on holidays, four in the morning, in choir. They have nine hours every day in choir, singing in a firm, high voice. Their beds are hard and uneven, worse than boards. From their rising till their going to bed, they hardly ever re-enter their cells; and have never any rest, going continually from exercise to exercise, and being always within sight of one another to banish sloth. This constant fatigue makes their legs swell very much. They never put on more clothes for cold, or less for heat, or change for perspiration. Many of them are subject to violent rheumatisms, so as scarcely to be able to drag themselves along. Their drink is very poor sour cider, such as is used by the very poorest persons in Normandy; or, for those monks from other countries, with whom that does not agree, very small beer. On fasting days they eat only dry herbs boiled with a little salt, with a large slice of coarse bread and half a pint of their cider. On other days, their portion is, besides an herb soup and a dessert of a raddish or two, or a few walnuts, or the like, a little plate of croudy, or kidney-beans, or lentiles, or other legumes or roots dressed with salt, or mixed with a little milk. They never eat fish on any account; never touch eggs or flesh unless very sick, and then only the coarsest and poorest, not anything tender or dainty. Once, the bread being made a little less coarse than ordinary, the abbot John de Rancé put the whole house under penance, to atone for the fault. At night, they have nothing but three, and, on church fasting days, two ounces of dry bread. They have many disciplines, long prostrations, and practise a perpetual mortification of all their senses. Abbot de Rancé turned out a novice, as not having the spirit of the order, because he observed him in weeding to put by the nettles, for fear of being stung. When they come to the fire in winter, they must not approach very near it, but stand reading at a distance in the calefactory, and never put out a foot or pull up their clothes to warm themselves, nor stay long. The least fault is most severely proclaimed and punished. The motto written on their chapter-house wall is most literally true: "The slightest fault here passes for a crime, and is always punished according to the utmost rigour, without excuse and without pity; and the body, the innocent enemy of the soul, becomes, by holy severity, her victim."

Even in their sickness the superior treats them with harshness, to increase their crowns.

Abbot John asking one very sick how he had slept, and he answering, very ill, the abbot said severely: "You are delicate, and unmortified indeed; you have slept too well." The next morning he answered to the like question of his abbot, that he had slept well: the abbot learning from the brother infirmarian that he had not closed his eyes, chid him as a liar; the monk, with great simplicity, answered, that he had slept as well as the night before, which was too well for such a sinner. Under their greatest pains, they reproach themselves as faint penitents, and add to them voluntary mortifications. In their agonies they are carried to the church, laid on ashes, and there receive the last sacraments and remain till they expire truly happy martyrs of penance. This reform of the Cistercian order to its primitive institution was made by abbot Armand John le Bouthillier de Rancé, of an illustrious and puissant family in France. He entered the ecclesiastical state, and was destined to succeed his uncle in the archbishopric of Tours. His learning and eloquence had made him speaker of the assemblies of the French clergy, and their oracle. He was chaplain to the Duke of Orleans, and the king had heaped on him great

church pensions and livings. Being thirty years of age, he began to entertain great scruples whether his employ of his revenues in equipages, table, and great house-keeping, and that of his time in diversions and company, was according to religion and duty. He chose those directors who were the least likely to flatter him by their advice, and sold his own estate of 30,000 livres, or £1,400 sterling a-year, which he had inherited from his family. He distributed a hundred thousand crowns amongst the poor, and the rest in other pious uses; resigned three abbeys and two priories, which he possessed in commendam, but taking on himself the Cistercian habit in his abbey of our Lady of la Trappe, commenced the reformation of it nearly according to the first institution of St. Benedict and the reform of St. Bernard, anno 1664. He testifies of himself that he suffered more from the first victory over himself in rising without a fire in the cold than from all the mortifications he underwent afterwards, so much does this depend on the will and imagination. He died in the year 1700, being seventy-five years of age, of which he had spent thirty-seven in that austere solitude. How cheerful these holy penitents are under their rigours appears from the visits that have been made of that house, in which every monk is obliged to discover his real sentiments, and in which they had offers of mitigations in their austerities. In the year 1678, the abbot of Prieres, being deputed visitor of la Trappe, declared that he found the religious, some of the most tender and delicate complexion, some above fourscore years of age, living on a water soup, made with cabbage or such herbs and salt, a portion of legumes, with only the same seasoning, brown bread, and half a pint of cider; yet all well, hearty, cheerful, and begging that their austerities might be increased. See the life of abbot John, wrote by Marsoulier, Canon of Usez, or rather that by Dom le Main, his superior.

Another time, anno 1664, when many accused this institution as too severe for nature, abbot John assembled his religious to declare their sentiments upon it. The fathers all cried out unanimously that their mortifications were too light for heaven, and to satisfy for their sins, protesting they underwent them all with joy, and were ashamed of their sloth in not doing more. When it was urged by a certain prelate that the lay-brothers, at least, ought to be allowed some indulgences, the same abbot, anno 1687, summoned them to chapter, read his letter to them, and commanded every one to declare his opinion and desires. 1. B. Malc said: "I have lived twenty years in this house, and never found anything but what was easy and sweet. I have always regarded myself as wax, to receive from your hands whatsoever figure you are pleased to mould me into; but I see myself as a wild horse, if I am not held in by the bridle; if my state wants a change, it ought to be more restrained. I have always endeavoured to obey, and regard in you the person of Christ." Falling on his knees, he added, that he was as a handkerchief in his hand, which he might use in the manner he pleased. 2. B. Pacomius said, his life had been unprofitable, he wished his rigours augmented, and was ashamed to see how much worldlings undergo for vanity. 3. B. Hilarion said, his austerities ought rather to be redoubled, to subject his body to the spirit, lest he should lose his crown: that, God having called him to that state, it was to be his sanctification. 4. B. Firmin, instead of relaxations, begged on his knees that his abbot would shut him up in a close prison,

as he had often done before. 5. B. Francis prayed that his austerities might be increased. The rest every one gave similar answers. See Abbot John's Conferences: second Sunday after Epiphany, anno 1687. T. 1, p. 287.

DISCOURSE XXX.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

1. CHRIST, to make penance a more easy and more powerful remedy of sin, was pleased in his infinite mercy, to make it a sacrament of the new law, instituting it "an exterior sensible rite, with a promise of grace, for the pardon of sin committed after baptism." For this purpose, he gave to the priests or pastors of his Church the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with the authority to bind or loose sinners, as they should present themselves before them contrite and worthy, or impenitent and indisposed. This he clearly expressed, saying to St. Peter in particular; Mat. xvi. 19. "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven;" and to all the apostles and, in them, to all their successors, the pastors of his Church, as is evident from the context; Mat. xviii. 18. "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." Christ, whose jurisdiction certainly reached men's interior or consciences, here gives to his Church not only the authority of excommunicating, or exteriorly cutting off from her communion, contumacious and rebellious sinners; but also an authority over their consciences, to bind or loose their penitent or impenitent souls, and consequently to open or shut to them the gates of heaven, thus investing his ministers with his jurisdiction to be exercised in his name, according to the laws prescribed by him, and constituting them his delegates and vicegerents in his tribunal in his Church. If these words imply an authority of excommunication in the Church; if in an accommodatious sense they may be remotely applied to the remote dispositions or means of obtaining pardon for sin; undoubtedly, their principal, proper, and natural meaning is, this interior jurisdiction conferred on the Church in the sacrament of penance. This the very words clearly import; this the perpetual tradition of the Church and consent of the Fathers demonstrate. Moreover, what Jesus here promised, he after his resurrection, actually conferred on his apostles. "He breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." John xx. 22, 23.

The Fathers acknowledge this authority granted to the pastors of the Church. Tertullian, the most ancient writer of the Latins, proves, that heaven cannot be shut to sinners, seeing the Lord left its keys to St. Peter, and Peter left them to the Church.[a] See St. Cyprian, ep. 54, ad Cornel.

[a] Memento hic Dominum claves ejus Petro, Petrum ecclesiæ reliquisse. Tert. Scorpion. c. 10, p. 496.

ed. Pam. & ep. 52, ad Antionias. St. Jerome, in Matt. c. 16 & 18, & ep. L., ad Heliod. St. Augustin, l. 20, de civ. Dei, c. 9, l. 1, contra advers. legis, c. 18. Tract. 22 & 49, in Joan., &c.

They extol this authority of priests over men's souls in the most magnificent terms possible. St. Chrysostom writes thus; (l. 3, de Sacerd. c. 5, T. 1. ed. Ben. p. 383,) "They who dwell on earth are entrusted with the dispensation of the things which are in heaven, and have received a power, which God had neither given to the angels nor to the archangels: for neither was it said to them; "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, &c." Mat. xviii. They who command on earth have a power of binding, only the bodies: but this bond reaches the soul, and transcends the heavens. And whatever the priests do below, God confirms the same above, and the Lord ratifies and regards as firm the sentence of his servants. "Whose sins," says he, "ye shall remit, they are remitted," &c. John xx. 23. What power could be greater than this? "The Father gave all judgment to his Son." John v. 42. And I see it all given again by the Son to them.—If the Emperor shall have given this honor to a subject, that he may cast into prison, or release out of it, whomsoever he shall please, he is looked upon with admiration. But he, who has received from God so much a greater power, as heaven is more precious than earth, and souls than bodies, &c." And c. 6, p. 384, "It was allowed to the priests of the Jews to cleanse the leprosy of the body; nay, rather not to cleanse, but to make trial of those that were cleansed; but these have received the power, not to try them who are cleansed, but to cleanse, not the leprosy of the body, but the uncleanness of the soul." See St. Hilary in Mat. xviii. p. 700, with the Benedictins' note.

They compare penance with baptism, and call it no less a sacrament. Tertullian calls them equally the two planks after shipwreck, l. de pœnit. c. 12. And St. Ambrose, (l. 1, de pœnit. c. 8,) refutes the Novations denying, that "the Church could forgive all sins by penance. It matters not whether priests assume to themselves the authority of remitting sins by penance, or by baptism. It is the same mystery in each.[a] But you say, that in baptism the grace of the mystery or sacrament works. What in penance? Does not the same name of God operate? What then? You assume the grace of God where you please, and reject it where you please." St. Austin compares penance with baptism, and expressly calls both sacraments; l. 5, de Bapt. c. 20, t. 9, p. 155. Also in Psal. cxlv. n. 8, t. 4, p. 1642. So does Theodoret, Epit. div. decr. c. 28, t. 4, p. 314. St. Jerome says: "Penance imitates the grace of baptism by the unspeakable clemency of our Saviour." l. 1, contra Pelag. t. 4. And ep. 1, ad. Heliod. t. 4, par. 2, p. 10, speaking of priests he says; "By whom we are Christians; who having the keys of the kingdom of heaven judge, as it were, before the day of judgment."

They add, that sinners cannot receive pardon but by the keys of the Church and the priest's absolution, as shall be seen below.

The Church condemned the Montanists in the second century, and the Novatians in the third, because they denied that the Church had authority, by virtue of the keys, to forgive all sins. "This wickedly," says St. Ambrose, l. de pœnit. c. 6, seeing it was said to Peter; "To thee I will give the keys," &c. From the state of the question against these heretics

[a] Idem in utroque mysterium est.

it is evident, that the authority of remitting sin by the priestly absolution was an incontestable truth allowed on both sides, only that the heretics would restrain it to certain sins. Add, that all the Oriental schismatical and heretical churches agree in the necessity of sacramental confession and absolution, as is clear from all their professions of faith. See Allatius, Arcudius, and the certificates collected in the end of the third tome of the work intitled Perpetuité de la Foy: though some of those churches have been separated from the Catholic communion since the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries.

It is true indeed that only God forgives sins; but what he does by his vicars and delegates, is his power, and his act and deed.[a] Nor is the priest an independent judge; he can pronounce sentence only according to the laws of his supreme judge; he can absolve only those, whom God has visited with the grace of compunction, as St. Gregory the great says, Hom. 26, in Evang. T. 1. p. 1555.

2. In the institution of the sacrament of penance is implied a divine precept of confessing all mortal sins, committed after baptism, to a priest. Luther and Calvin call this confession advantageous and advisable, but inveigh against the obligation or precept of it. What other heretics thought of it, may be seen in Bossuet's History of Variations, B. 3, & 11, and in the works of the two brothers Walemburg, Tom. II. p. 18. The council of Trent, Sess. 14, c. 5, declares, according to the tradition of the Catholic church, that it is of divine precept, though not commanded by Christ to be necessarily public; nor could that be prudently ordained by any human law.[b]

Christ gave to the pastors of his Church the power of remitting or retaining sin by the sentence, that they should pronounce in his name and authority, as has been shown how they cannot exercise this judgment without knowing the case of the sinner by his voluntary accusation of himself. As, if a king gives a subordinate judge power to decide a cause, he, by the same warrant, cannot but give him authority to examine and know it. This the Apostles understood, and this the Church always practised from the earliest ages.

We read that, when St. Paul preached at Ephesus, Acts xix. 18, "many of them that believed came confessing and declaring their deeds." The words, "their deeds," shows it was a particular confession of their sins, not merely a general accusation that they were sinners. Nor were these catechumens or new converts: for the original Greek word, πεπισευκοτων, by which they are designated, is in the preter-perfect tense, "some of those who believed, or were of the faithful before." It seems, from the following verse, that they had, after their conversion, been guilty still of certain superstitious practices.

St. James says, c. v., v. 16, "Confess your sins one to another;" that is, to the priests of the Church, of whom he was then speaking, and whom he had just before ordered to be called for, and brought into the sick. The words "your sins" express clearly a particular confession in detail. Origen, Hom. 2, in Lev. St. Augustin, Hom. 12, inter 50. Bede in Jac. v. Alcuin, ep. 71.

[a] Solus hoc, inquies, Deus poterit. Verum est; sed & quod per sacerdotes suos facit ipsius potestas est. St. Pacian. ad Symphor. ep. I.

[b] See on this Estius in 4, dist. 17. St. Marthe, Traité sur la Confession, &c.

The second council of Chalons, St. Thomas, &c., explain this of sacramental confession.

Also, St. John, ep. 1. 9, writes: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." Which words, according to Estius and Calmet, two exact and learned critics, must necessarily be understood of this sacrament, as the apostle speaks of Christians, and says, confess our sins, not confess ourselves sinners.

To copy the clear testimonies of the Fathers would swell our reflections into a volume. Yet, as this subject is obscured by many, it is necessary to quote some short passages, which may suffice to set the tradition and practice of the Church, in every age, in a clear light.

St. Clemens, bishop of Rome, and disciple of St. Peter, ep. 2, ad Cor. 11, 1, p. 137, ed. Clerici, exhorts all to penance, whilst we have time; for, after we shall have left this world, we can no more confess or do penance.

In the second century, St. Irenæus, treating of Mark the heresiarch, relates, that women converted from his sect could not be admitted into the Church till they had confessed their sins and secret lusts. And B. 3, c. 4, on Cerdo's often repenting and often relapsing, he says: "He finished, sometimes teaching privately his heresy, sometimes making a confession," "*modo et exomologesin faciens;*" not in public penance, which could never be repeated, but only in private confession. Tertullian, l. de pœnit., c. 10, p. 127, inveighing against those who shun or defer confession out of shame, exclaims: "And so they perish with their shame." See also c. 9, p. 126. Origen says, Hom. 2, in Ps. 37, n. 6, T. 2, ed. Ben., p. 688. "The scripture teaches us that it is necessary that a sin be not concealed inwardly; therefore, look about diligently to whom you ought to confess your sin. If he see your disease to be such that it ought to be exposed in the assembly of the Church, this is to be done with mature deliberation and the counsel of a sufficiently skilful physician." Hence it is plain that there were many confessors besides the bishop and his grand penitentiary. And Hom. 2, in Levit. T. 2, p. 191, having enumerated six means by which sin is forgiven, viz., martyrdom, baptism, alms, forgiving of injuries, charity in converting brethren, and the love of God, he adds, (for mortal sin after baptism,) "there is a seventh, though painful and laborious remission of sin by penance, when the sinner is not ashamed to confess his sin to the priest of the Lord, and seek a remedy." And Hom. 3, ib. 11, 4, p. 196, "If we have done anything in private—if we have committed anything only in word, or in the secret of our thoughts, all must necessarily be told and published."

In the third century, St. Cyprian, (Tr. de lapsis, p. 95,) relates, that true penitents, who had not fallen into idolatry, "yet, because they had only thought of it, with grief and simplicity confessing this to the priests of God, making a declaration of their conscience, expose the burden of their mind. Let every one confess his sin while he is yet in the world, whilst his confession can be admitted, whilst the satisfaction and remission done through the priests is agreeable to God."

In the fourth century, St. Basil says, (Reg. brev., qu. 229, T. 2, p. 288.) "It is necessary to confess sins to those to whom the dispensation of the mysteries of God is committed."

St. Gregory of Nyssa, ep. Can. ad Letoium, Can. 6, T. 2, p. 122, speaking of secret theft, a sin not subject to public penance, says: "If

he discover his sin to the priest, with a heart entirely changed, he will cure his disease." And in his homilies upon penance, and against those who judge bitterly, T. 2, p. 176, or rather St. Asterius of Amasa in the same age, as Photius witnesses, Col. 271: "Boldly discover thy secrets to him; manifest the hidden recesses of thy heart as occult wounds to a physician. He will have a regard both to thy honour and thy health. Parents are more moved with their children's disgrace than the sons themselves."

St. Athanasius, T. 2. Collect. Patr. p. 103, by Montfaucon. "As a man baptised by a priest is enlightened by the grace of the Holy Ghost, so he, who confesses in repentance through the priest, receives, by Christ's grace, pardon.

St. Ambrose is said, by Paulinus his deacon, in his life, to have been accustomed to weep over penitents confessing their sins to him so as to force them also to weep, and to have been religiously scrupulous in not mentioning anything of the crimes confessed to him except to God alone in his prayers for his penitents.

That holy father writes thus, l. 2, de pœnit., c. 6, T. 4, p. 374: "If thou wouldst be justified, confess thy sin; for a bashful confession of sin looses the bonds of crimes." And c. 7, p. 376. "Discover thy sin outwardly." And in his exhortation to penance, against a delay of it, he urges: "Because he knows not if he can receive penance hereafter, and confess his sin to God and the priest." Which words St. Augustin also repeats, Serm. 393, Col. Hom. 41, T. 5, p. 1509.

St. Augustin writes thus: Conc. 2, in Ps. 101, n. 3, p. 1103, T. 4. "When you hear a man, by confessing, bring forth his conscience, he is now brought out of the sepulchre; but he is not yet unbound. When is he unbound? by whom is he unbound? 'Whatsoever you shall loose on earth,' &c., says Christ."

And Serm. 392, col. 49. inter 50, n. 3, t. 5, p. 1504. "Let no man say to himself, I do penance privately—I do penance with God. Therefore it was said without cause: 'Whatsoever you shall loose,' &c. Therefore, without cause were the keys given to the Church of God." And in Ps. lxvi., n. 6, t. 4, p. 660. "If you lurk unconfessed, you will be condemned upon your confession."

St. Pacian is very explicit on confession to the priest: Paræn. ad pœnit. "Cease to cover your wounded conscience," &c.

Sozomen, l. 7, c. 16, ed. Vales., relates that, upon the origin of the Novatian heresy, many churches, "seeing penitents were obliged necessarily to confess their sins," constituted a public penitentiary to hear them. He and Socrates, l. 5, c. 19, give us an account how a woman at Constantinople imprudently divulged a crime which she had committed, to the great scandal of the Church, says Socrates. Upon this, Nectarius, then archbishop of Constantinople, abolished the office of public penitentiary. Calvin triumphs as if he had abolished private confession, which consequently could then only be looked upon as a church precept; but it is evident that confession was held necessary for penitents, as Sozomen declares. Nectarius did not abolish even public penance, which subsisted in that church afterwards, as appears from St. Chrysostom, Hom. 3, in Ephes. & 9 & 12, in Hebr. from S. Nilus, ep. ad Chariclum, the council in Trullo, &c. He only set aside all public confession of private sins, and the office of the public penitentiary, who was a censor to inspect the manners of the faith-

ful, and could order public penance or public confession according to his discretion. After this, penitents confessed to whom they pleased, and according to their own devotion and prudence approached the sacraments. This fact, therefore, is a clear proof of the precept of confession.

St. Chrysostom says, (Hom. 5, de verb. Isa. t. 6, p. 132, ed. Ben.) "The throne of the priesthood is placed in heaven. He sits judge on earth: the Lord follows the servant, and confirms in heaven whatever he judges on earth." And Hom. 30, in Gen. p. 301, t. 4, "the devil labours much to hinder us from confessing our sins, and discovering our wounds to the physician, and recovering health." Hom. 20, in Gen. p. 175, he writes: "If he will hasten to the confession of his sins, and discover his ulcer to the physician, who will heal and not reproach him;—and speak to him alone, no one else being conscious, and carefully declaring all things, he will easily amend himself. For the confession of sins is their abolition." And Hom. 3, ad. Pop. Ant. t. 2, p. 42. "Manifest thy sore to the priest," He teaches at full length, that the priests are the physicians of our souls. l. 2, de Sacerd. c. 4, t. 1. p. 374. As do St. Jerome in c. 10, Eccl. St. Ambrose in Off. 37. St. Greg. Nyss. ep. Can. Origen, Hom. 2, in Ps. 37.

St. John Climacus, Gr. 4, n. 11, says; "Without which confession no one shall obtain pardon."

And John of Raithe, his contemporary, in his Annotations, ib. "We are bound by the necessity of the divine precept to confess our sins, as is manifest from the apostolical traditions."

Bede relates, Hist. l. 5, c. 14, that king Coenred exhorted a sick nobleman of a wicked life to confess, and relinquish his vices; but he answered that he would not now confess his sins, but when he should be restored to his health. And l. 4, c. 27, that such was the angelical countenance of St. Cuthbert that no one durst in confession conceal any secrets of his heart from him.

Pope Innocent the First, ep. Decretal. ad Decent. c. 7 t. 2, p. 1247, says; "It is the part of the priest, in weighing the malice of sins to judge of them, that he attend to the penitent's confession."

We have the ancient forms of confession, with interrogations, examples, &c. in the oldest ritual books, as of St. Gregory the great, in his Sacramentary, p. 213, of St. Fulgentius and others in Menard in his Notes, p. 450. Others in Martene de antiquis Rit. Par. 2, c. 6, p. 450. That of John the faster, patriarch of Constantinople, in Morinus, Append. p. 76, 94.

Particular examples of private confession, besides those of public penance, we have in St. Irenæus, in St. Ambrose, Socrates, &c.

S. Ansbert, archbishop of Rouen, was the confessor of Theodoric, king of France. Mabillon, sec. 2. Ben. p. 1055. As was St. Wiro, an Irish bishop of Pepin the great, Mayor of the king of France's palace, and founder of the greatest race of its kings, who was accustomed to go to him to confession bare-foot, and to obey his words. Bolland, 8 Maii.

Our adversaries object, that there is no mention of confession generally required before communion; but nothing is clearer from all antiquity than that it was always of precept for all persons guilty of mortal sin. Hence St. Cyprian inveighs thus against sacrilegious communions, Tr. de lapsis. "Contemning the sentence of the Apostle, 'Whosoever shall eat and drink unworthily, &c.' they came to the Eucharist before sins are expiated, be-

fore the confession of the crime is made, before the conscience is purified by sacrifice and the imposition of the hand of the priest, and so they offered violence to his body and blood." And St. Ambrose. l. 6, in Lucam, c. 9. "No one receives the food of Christ unless healed. Let the order of the mystery be every where observed, that a remedy be first applied to the wounds; and after that he be fed with the heavenly banquet." So speaks also St. Pacian, &c.

If Eusebius, St. Chrysostom, and others say, that we are to confess to God alone, they often speak of a confession of praise, as Eusebius in Ps. 191, (See Montfaucon, Prælim. c. 7, p. 31. Ceillier, t. 4, p. 410,) or of catechumens, or of the evening examen of daily venial sins, or of sacramental confession, which is often said also by moderns to be made to God alone, because only to his vicegerent, presiding in his name, as Godfrey of Vendome says, ep. 16, which is the same as when St. Anastasius the Sinaite, Hom. de sacra syn. says, "Confess thy sins to Christ through the priest." And St. Austin, serm. 393, and St. Leo, ep. 136, "to God and the priest."

DISCOURSE XXXI.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

1. To make this sovereign remedy of penance more sure, more powerful and more easy, our divine Redeemer, the true lover of lost souls, was pleased, in his infinite mercy and compassion for sinners, to raise it to the most excellent dignity of a sacrament of the new law of grace, and make it the noble instrument for imparting the fruit of his most sacred blood, and the merits of his sufferings and death, to the most miserable of souls. For this end, he constituted the priests, whom he ordained the dispensers of his mysteries on earth, his vicars and delegated judges of sinners, committing to them the keys of the kingdom of heaven, by the use of which authority, according to the holy laws he has prescribed to them, they reconcile truly penitent sinners, who had relapsed after baptism, to his divine favour and grace by the sentence of absolution, which they pronounce over them in his name, and following the terms of his merciful commission. So that they sit in his tribunal on earth, and it is his judgment which they exercise. He is the great invisible High Priest, who absolves the penitent, and clothes him with his precious and most holy grace interiorly, whilst the priest exercises his exterior ministry. To his priests therefore he has given a far greater authority than he ever bestowed on any angels or archangels: and God ratifies above and follows himself the sentence of his servants, as St. Chrysostom l. 3, de Sacerd. c. 5, and St. Gregory the great, de cur. past. say: "They judge and pronounce his sentence, as it were, before the day of judgment." St. Jerome, ep. 1. ad Heliodor. p. 107. And St. Hilary in Mat. xviii. p. 700, ed. Ben. "To strike all with the greatest awe, he laid down the immoveable judgment of the sentence of the apostles, (and their successors) that whosoever they should bind on earth, that is, leave bound by the chains of their sins; and whosoever they should loose, viz. upon their confession receive to the pardon of salvation, these

by the condition of the apostolic sentence should be either bound or loosed also in heaven."

2. It may be alleged, that the sole virtue of penance, without any confession or sacrament, remitted sin in the old law, and has the same effect still, if joined with a desire of the sacrament, when it cannot be actually received. What then is the prerogative and benefit of this sacrament so much extolled? Its advantages are that it furnishes us a means of remission more powerful, as it more nobly applies to the soul the price of our redemption and propitiation; more sure, as it pardons sin by a visible sign and exterior sentence; lastly, more easy and ordinary. The contrition, which was of itself necessary to obtain pardon, was necessarily to be a great, intense, and quite extraordinary sorrow and grace, very rarely found in penitents just rising from the state of sin; and "because few arrived at that degree, pardon of sins could be hoped for only by very few that way," says the Roman or Trent Catechism. But what was so rare and extraordinary a mercy, is by this wonderful sacrament, made frequent and easy. It is true, the sacrament essentially requires contrition or the virtue of penance, as a constituent part; but this in a more ordinary degree; and its preparation, by its acts and special graces, helps to stir that up.

Hence, the Church has always looked upon the benefit of this sacrament as a great mercy, and bewailed the death of penitents deprived of it, as a dangerous misfortune, though not absolutely to be despaired of. St. Augustin cries out with tears for such: "if ministers of the sacraments are wanting, how great a destruction follows them, who depart out of this world, either not regenerated by baptism, or unbound by absolution!" ep. 228, al. 180. This saint himself had wept bitterly in perfect repentance: yet presumed not on the grace of pardon received, but with baptism; Conf. l. 4, c. ult. & l. 9, c. 4. St. Paul, Acts xxii. 16, and Cornelius, Acts x. 2, wanted baptism, though they had perfect contrition. And St. Augustin says; "How much soever a catechumen is advanced in virtue (by the ordinary course of grace) he still carries the burthen of his iniquity: it is not forgiven him except when he comes to baptism." Tr. 13, in Joan. n. 6, t. 3, p. 394. It is the same equally of the sacrament of penance, according to the same holy doctor; wherefore the catholics in Africa, seeing their bishops and priests carried into exile, in the Vandalic persecution, thus bemoaned their own abandoned condition, destitute of the sacraments, "Who will baptise our little ones? Who will bestow on us the benefit of penance, and loosen those bound with sins, by the indulgence of reconciliation? because to you it was said: 'Whatsoever you shall loose, &c.'" as Victor of Utica relates, de Pers. Vandal. l. 2, p. 656. Bibl. Patr. t. 5, par. 3.

On this account the church forbids absolution to be ever denied to any sinner at the article of death; which was even an order of the first general council of Nice, Can. 13, whatever may have been the severity of some private churches. See Lupus, Schol. ib.

The Canon law declares, cap. presbyter, causa 26, that a priest refusing absolution to a dying man may be the cause of his damnation; and Pope Celestine, ep. 2, t. 2, Conc. p. 1619, related in cap. Agnovimus, causa 27, de pœn. states, that this is to add a spiritual death to his corporal death, and to deprive him of salvation; adding, "we tremble with horror that any one should be found so impious and cruel," &c. The church therefore allows no reservation of cases in the article of death, but gives jurisdiction to all priests without the least restriction on that occasion, that no

one, if possible, may die without the benefit of absolution. Conc. Trid. Sess. xiv. cap. 7. This sacrament then affords us a more easy and a more abundant grace of pardon, and an extraordinary mercy.

3. The better to understand this unspeakable benefit, we must reflect, that to have been once delivered from the sentence of eternal damnation was an infinite mercy; a grace which could have been no ways thought of by any creature, had not God's boundless clemency planned the wonderful design, and carried it into execution, by a mystery, which will fill all creatures with astonishment to all eternity. Pardon was never offered to the devils for a single offence; much less so admirable a redemption as ours, by the incarnation of the Son of God at the infinite price of his adorable blood. But we were made partakers of this whole wonderful ransom by baptism; all our guilt was blotted out by it, and we were reinstated in grace and in all those glorious titles, which we had most justly forfeited: nay, our condition was rendered happier by this superabundant propitiation, and a promise and offer of greater crowns made than if we had never been guilty of any rebellion against God. Who would have thought it possible, that we could be so insensible and ungrateful as, after this mercy, again to relapse into sin, and make void so plentiful, so astonishing a redemption? And, in case of such a baseness, what further mercy could be hoped for? How justly should we deserve to be sentenced a thousand times over to the worst of hells? "There is now left no sacrifice for sins." (Heb. x. 26.) Alas! my soul, I have been capable of, and have actually fallen into this so inconceivable and monstrous guilt; yet the still more inconceivable mercy of God has provided me with a second remedy. The ransom paid for my sin by Christ, being infinite and inexhaustible, was graciously offered by him to be applied to my soul, whensoever, Oh! stupendous mercy, even after the basest relapses, I should again sincerely have recourse to it. Penance is the great instrument of this stupendous grace, principally and most nobly, as it is a sacrament of the new law. My soul, admire the infinite mercy of God in having instituted it; praise his goodness in it in raptures of love and gratitude at the consideration of it, and resolve never to cease returning thy poor thanks for it. Ah! without it, where had I myself been? irretrievably lost, perhaps many times over.

4. Christ in this sacrament has given to his church an unbounded authority to forgive all sins, upon the condition of sincere repentance. The heresiarch Montanus advanced that the church ought not to remit the more grevious sins, as idolatry, murder, fraud, fornication, and the like, lest such indulgence should be an encouragement to christians sometimes to commit them. See Tertullian, l. de pudic. c. 21. Novatus of Carthage and Novatian of Rome, two schismatical priests, added this heresy to their separation from their pastors, that the Church could not pardon apostacy from the faith to idolatry, and certain other heinous crimes. These errors were immediately condemned by the Church, and confuted at large by the fathers of the second, third, and fourth centuries. For Christ's unbounded mercy gave to his Church an unlimited power to remit all sins whatsoever, and to whomsoever, upon their true repentance, as the express terms of his commission import, and the Church has always maintained and practised. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, being a direct resisting of the calls of grace and the means of conversion, is called unpardonable, because most difficult to be forgiven, as repentance for it is difficult and

very rare; yet it is pardonable by the keys of the Church, unless actually closed by final impenitence, to which it usually leads souls. No one then, who seeks sincerely the remedy of his soul, is to be excluded from the benefit of this universal and all-powerful sacrament; for Christ would have no restriction or exception in his mercies, of which he established this the instrument. "He excepted no crime, who opened a pardon to all," says St. Ambrose, l. 1, de pœnit. c. 2. And St. Jerome, ep. ad Oceanum, t. 4, p. 646. "Christ died in vain, if there are any, whom he cannot revive. John the Baptist is not to be believed, who showing Christ said; 'Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world;' if there are yet any in the world, whose sins he has not taken away." O sweet and amiable mercy! O goodness most comfortable to sinners! How is God to be ever admired in it, loved and praised by all creatures to eternity!

5. This sacrament is, by the divine law promulgated in its institution, absolutely necessary for the remission of all mortal sins committed after baptism. How could the Church bind sinners, if they are not obliged to undergo its sentence, and to present themselves before its tribunal! A coercive jurisdiction, which is entirely precarious, and which delinquents are not obliged to submit to, must be null and of no force. For a sinner to say, that he does penance privately and before God alone, without recourse to the judgment of the Church, is to destroy the words of Christ to his Church, and to annul the power of its keys; it is to make void God's gospel; to make void the words of Christ, as St. Augustin justly observes, (Serm. 292, hom. 49, inter 50, n. 3, t. 5, p. 1504,) and as the Church has always both inculcated and practised.

Therefore, by the divine precept of Christ, when he instituted this holy sacrament, and gave this law, all, who by baptism have subjected themselves to the Church, and have afterwards violated the laws of the gospel, are bound to submit themselves to, and to undergo the judgment of this same holy Church in the interior tribunal of penance, in which it exercises the power given to it by Christ, of remitting and retaining sins.

Hence, there is a great difference between the remission of sin committed before, and of that committed after baptism. "Sin committed before baptism is washed away by baptism; if committed after baptism, it is healed by penance and reconciliation;" says St. Augustin, l. 2, de adult. conjug. c. 16, t. 6, p. 414. This then is the only bath that remains to cleanse my offences after baptism. How diligently must I use it!

6. Perfect contrition, from a motive of fervent intense charity, does, as in the old law, so still justify immediately. God's promises for this grace are clear, and regard all times and dispensations of his law. Ezech. xxxiii. 12, Luke x. 12. Whence St. Chrysostom says, Hom. v. in 2 Tim. t. 12, p. 703. "As fire, entering a wood, clears and removes all before it, so the fervour of love, wheresoever it falls, cuts up and takes away all, that demolishes the divine seed of grace. Where charity is, all evils are removed; for all sins are loosed and cleared by the presence of charity."

But this perfect degree of contrition is known only to God, and is always uncertain to us without a revelation. And we know it to be a very extraordinary grace in sinners just arising from their crimes. Miracles of such conversions are very rare. "I do not say, says the Lord, but I may save some such: for I am able in a moment to restore all: but I shall not assemble great conventicles of such;" as St. Bernard writes, Serm. 75, de di. and as the Trent catechism says, n. 37. "Few come to this degree."

And even when perfect contrition does justify before the sacrament be actually received, or when it cannot be received for want of a priest, it implies a resolution of satisfying this precept by confessing, if possible, and submitting to the tribunal of the Church. This purpose ought to be explicit in all, who are not in an inculpable ignorance of the divine precept of confession: in others it must be an implicit one, viz., of doing all, in general, that God requires for pardon. For justification received before does not exempt from the law of subjecting the sin to the tribunal of the Church; nay, that grace is conferred only upon the condition, and in virtue of such a purpose. The council of Trent expressly teaches, Sess. 1, c. 4, that though this contrition is sometimes perfected by charity, and reconciles to God before the sacrament be actually received, "nevertheless this reconciliation is not to be ascribed to that contrition, without the desire and purpose of the sacrament which is included in it.

7. This is the constant tradition of the Catholic church. Hence the fathers called this sacrament the only plank remaining after shipwreck. Thus St. Jerome, ep. ad Demetriad. 99, ol. 65, p. 790, t. 4, par. 2, calls it "that second plank, as it were, to the miserable after shipwreck." And St. Pacian reproaches the Novatians, who denied that the church could remit all sins, as guilty of the utmost cruelty, and says, (ep. 1, ad Symphor,) "Who could take away the plank from one perishing?" St. Ambrose says, (l. 1. de pœnit. c. 16, t. 2, p. 414,) "If any one, having secret crimes, yet does penance diligently for Christ, how does he receive pardon, if the reconciliation of the church be not granted him?" And St. Leo says, (ep. 82, al. 91, ad Theodor. t. 1, p. 605,) "The manifold mercy of God has so provided for men's falls, that the hope of eternal life is repaired not only by baptism, but also by the medicine of penance; the help of the divine goodness being so ordained, that God's mercy cannot be obtained but by the supplications of the priests."

Hence I may apply to myself the words of Tertullian, l. de pœn. c. 4, p. 122. "Penance is life. You, O sinner, like to me, nay less than me, (for I acknowledge my surpassing guilt) so seize on, so embrace it, as one ship-wrecked does some plank. This will raise you up, drowned in the floods in the sin, and will bring you into the haven of the divine clemency. Suddenly lay hold on the opportunity of the unexpected safety."

8. Venial sins are not necessarily to be confessed, or subjected to the tribunal of this sacrament, as they do not shut eternally the gates of heaven; consequently they cannot be retained or bound. There are also many other means, by which a soul in the state of grace may obtain pardon of them. For this, indeed, it is necessary that she repent of them at least virtually, if they do not occur. Secondly, that she be in God's favour by sanctifying grace, as God's friendship and familiarity must be pre-supposed, for his close familiarity to be recovered. Charity must be in a soul, or an increase of its fervour cannot be obtained; and one, who wilfully perseveres an enemy of God, can never, in that state, make any satisfaction to God, or receive the pardon of any offence. Venial sins of frailty seem to be usually blotted out by interior contrition; but not venial sins of malice or of direct knowlege and deliberation, which require other more powerful remedies.

9. Though venial sin does not absolutely stand in need of the sacraments to be blotted out, yet it is no other way so easily and so powerfully washed away as by the sacraments, especially by baptism, the blessed

eucharist, and extreme unction; and, above all, by the sacrament of penance. Christ's commission to his church expresses all sin whatsoever. Its absolution therefore has a power of remitting all sin, that is subjected to it with true repentance. And this sacrament is the universal medicine for all the wounds of the soul. The least sin is a debt too great for all the endeavours of creatures, ever to be able to pay, except by the application of the blood of Christ, without which there is no remission. It alone can wash any of our stains. Only the Lamb, that was slain and is risen again, can efface sin out of the book, in which it is written, or even bear the sight of that book. All the whiteness of the robes of the saints comes from being whitened in his blood. Apoc. vii. 15. Prayer, patience, pardon of injuries, and other good works, with repentance, in the just, will apply the blood of Christ for the remission of venial sin: but the sacrament of penance is its proper vessel and most powerful instrument for this effect. Also, the more slothful Christians are now-a-days in the practice of other means and the severer works of penance, the more fervent and diligent ought they to be in the use of this; viz., of confessing their venial sins. The confession of venial sins not only obtains absolution, but also incredible strength against them, a singular light to discover them, and plentiful graces to repair the losses and damages caused by them; and exercises in one act humility, obedience, charity, and other virtues, as St. Francis of Sales observes, Introd. Part 12, c. 2, The spirit and practice of the saints and of the church, a rule that can never err in morals, as it is the spirit of Christ himself, authorises this frequent confession of venial sins. This is the argument made use of by the council of Trent, Sess. 14, c. 4. St. John exhorts to the frequent confession of venial sins, or such as the most just fall into, and which no one can say he is without; 1 John i. 8, for he attributes the pardon of them only to the blood of Christ. "The blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse from all sin," v. 7. And for this he advises to confess them, v. 9. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just," i. e. he is faithful to his promises to his church to remit them. St. James also, c. v. 16, exhorting to frequent confession, speaks evidently of small faults, such as are daily in the just. This practice in the church is clear from the life of St. Theodore the Studite, the Penitential, &c.

But though this be a most wholesome and advantageous counsel, nay, in many, necessary to make them watchful against the multiplication of such falls, yet a too solicitous, prolix, and tedious confession of venial sins is to be avoided, because it exhausts the soul superfluously, consumes too much time, and hinders the heart from its best employ, the exercise of its affections, as Gerson observes.

10. Although, if a sin has been once subjected to the keys of the Church in a valid confession, followed by a legal sacramental absolution, there can be no further obligation of ever confessing it again, yet such a practice is often good and advantageous. For, though it be remitted, it is still a sin committed after baptism, consequently a sufficient matter of this sacrament; for it is still an object of an act of the virtue of penance. We are also to pray for a fuller and more perfect pardon of it. "Be not without fear for sin forgiven," Eccl. v. 5. The priest at mass daily prays for pardon of all his innumerable past sins; so ought all, who assist at that sacrifice of propitiation. David always continued to pray for the pardon of the sins of his youth. Ps. xxiv. 7. Job always feared for them. Job

xiii. 26. Again David testifies, that God assured him his sins were remitted, Ps. xxxi. 5, 6; yet he still prays for a fuller pardon, and to be cleansed whiter than snow, and washed more and more. Ps. l. 4, 9. There are degrees in justification; one drop of Christ's blood can wash away all the sins in the world; but the application of it is only as Christ has instituted, and depends on the conditions on our side. We must be justified more and more till death. Naaman's leprosy was washed seven times in the Jordan, before it was perfectly cleansed, so that his skin was made as white as that of a child. 4 Kings, v. 4.

DISCOURSE XXXII.

ON FREQUENT CONFESSION.

1. A SOUL, which has the misfortune to lie under the guilt of mortal sin, is bound immediately to enter into a spirit of penance, and not long to defer suing for a reconciliation, by confession to a priest, when opportunity allows it. For a delay exposes her to new sins and other fatal consequences, even to the great danger of final impenitence, either by sudden death; "for he, who has promised pardon to the penitent, has never promised a to-morrow to the dissembler," says St. Prosper, Sent. 71, from St. Augustin "in Ps. 144, t. 10, App. p. 228, or by wearying out God's patience, and provoking him justly to abandon her. "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not, that the goodness of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath;" Rom. ii. 4, 5. Such a soul hangs as a heavy load or burthen, as it were, on the mercy of God, and by her abuses of his long forbearance and merciful calls, becoming insupportable to it, is cast off.[a]

2. Her delay is an abuse and an interpretative contempt of the holy sacrament of penance. If some king had prepared a rich storehouse of all sorts of provisions and drugs, with able physicians and surgeons to attend gratis, in favour of his poor subjects; yet, through some obstinate distaste or sloth, no one would make use of it, would he not be justly incensed at seeing his labour, expense, care, and affection so ill requited? And can God Almighty behold his love so much slighted, and a mercy which cost him so dear, and which he offers with the kindest invitations, so much contemned, without being justly provoked? He exhorts sinners, he cries out to them by his ministers, he calls them by himself: "Come unto me all you that labour and are burthened, and I will refresh you." Though you have sinned, I desire not the death of a sinner, but that he be converted and live. You are the work of my own hands, framed to my image. Even if a mother could forget the child of her womb, I shall never forget you. I bear you engraven on my hands, bored for love of you. For you I died a bleeding victim on a cross; and I prepared by my blood this sacrament, as an easy and sovereign balsam

[a] Noli esse amplius oneri misericordæ Dei. Tertullian, l. de pœnit.

to heal all your wounds, and restore and increase your spiritual health and strength. Why, then, will you die, O house of Israel? If you think me harsh, or my merciful remedy hard or bitter, come make the trial, and then accuse me if you can. Isa. i. 18. You will find it to be all mildness, sweetness, and comfort.

3. Ah, sinner! can this sacrament seem a hard condition of pardon? Had God offered you mercy on the severest terms imaginable, all would have been light for so great a happiness. Ah! what would a damned soul give for such an offer on any condition whatever? With what earnestness and joy would she embrace the means, and think even the severest possible to be as nothing? Think seriously what the slavery of sin and what hell are! Think what the joys of heaven and the advantages of grace, and nothing will seem severe or difficult that can rescue you from such evils, and restore such treasures and advantages. But what is the condition which God requires? Only that you repent, and confess your guilt. Could he insist upon anything more easy? Could he demand less? Certainly the very sight of so inconceivable a mercy ought to pierce you through and through to the very marrow with grief for having offended such infinite goodness, and make you run to embrace with the greatest fervour the means of a reconciliation offered. What St. Gregory Nazianzen says of baptism equally suits penance. "Fear not the length of the way, nor the wide spaces of seas, nor fire, nor any other impediment to obtain this grace. But seeing it neither requires labour, pains, nor journey, what folly is it to defer till another time so great a good? You who thirst, hasten to the waters; you who want money, go and buy, and drink this wine, without giving any price for it. O wonderful readiness and quickness of beneficence! O easy method of contracting! This good is offered to be purchased by the sole price of the will. God is pleased to look upon your desire of it as a sufficient price. He thirsts to be thirsted; he offers wine to those who desire to drink; he esteems it a favour to be asked a mercy. His nature is munificent and ready; he gives with a greater desire than others can receive." Or. in Sanct. Bapt. p. 446.

And St. Chrysostom writes thus: Hom. 44, in Genesin, t. 4, p. 453. "God, inviting to penance, says: 'Am not I he who am crying to the prophets, and repeating: After all, be converted again to me, and she is not converted?' Jer. iii. 7. Do not I do all things to free them from destruction? If they return, do I defer one moment to receive them? Do not I say, 'Even whilst thou art yet speaking, behold I am with thee?' Isa. lxv. 24. Are they so desirous of their own salvation as I am? Did I create you out of nothing that you should perish? Did I prepare in vain my eternal kingdom and its innumerable goods for you? Did not I threaten hell only for this? Neither do I stop or defer, when I see a soul converted; for I only require one thing, that he confess his sins, and abstain from them. Is my condition burdensome? Did I not know that men grow worse, if they do not confess, I would not even exact that." And Hom. 27, in Gen. p. 264. "The Ninevites obtained pardon in three days. The good thief wanted not one short hour. God defers not, if he has the soul converted. He will also hear us, if we will be diligent these few days of Lent, fast, appease God by earnest prayer, weep, confess carefully our sins, lay open our wounds to our physician, and discover the ulcers of our souls, nor reject the medicine he gives, bringing the other conditions, contrition and true compunction of heart, plentiful alms," &c.

4. This holy sacrament, frequented with truly fervent dispositions, is the most powerful means to cleanse our souls by the most abundant application of the blood of Christ; both because the humiliation of confession, the more diligent examen, and the more fervent prayer and contrition, all parts contained in it, and still more because the grace of the sacrament most powerfully contribute to this effect. The stains of our whole life past are to be continually wiping off more and more perfectly, by prayer, compunction, alms, and the repeated use of this sovereign bath. We also add daily new sins, and a great branch of the duty of every christian is speedily to cleanse them by these same antidotes. "Our ancient fathers frequently admonished," says St. Dorotheus, Doctr. 3. "that a monk ought never to suffer his conscience to be pricked with the least thing." To preserve our souls in the most perfect purity possible, we must be extremely watchful in discovering all our frailties, and very fervent in washing them away by speedy acts of interior compunction, and the practice of exterior works of penance. We ought then, especially as christians now-a-days are usually more slothful in the fervent use of the other means of satisfaction, and in the continual watchfulness over their hearts, to have, in the first place, frequent recourse to the sacrament of penance, as often as our circumstances will afford us an opportunity of doing it with fervour and devotion, and with due preparation and dispositions. The oftener linen is washed, the cleaner it is kept; so are our souls, the oftener they are well scoured; but there is this great difference in the comparison, that, where such linen will be worn by washing, our souls on the contrary are made new and strong.

St. Peter of Luxembourg, a prelate, who from his infancy was of the most innocent life, was accustomed for many years to go to confession several times a day. We read the same of some other saints, who would confess after any glance of mere curiosity at a bird, or at the heavens, or other such action against the rules of that strict mortification, which they had prescribed to themselves. So very frequent a practice of confession is no ways to be advised nor allowed in tepid christians, who do not strenuously labour to withdraw their hearts from all earthly things, and who will not, at least so frequently, have the sincere dispositions of penance for the most ordinary failings, which they will not even discover in the motions of their hearts. A devout receiving of this sacrament must go before those actions, which require a more particular purity of soul. As St. Charles Borromeo said mass every day, he went every day to confession with extraordinary compunction for the smallest frailties; in which he was imitated by Cardinal Berulle and others. St. Ignatius of Loyola once sought a confessor, finding none at home, to accuse himself, that he had discovered a subject's fault to three superiors, when one might have redressed it.

5. Penance is a universal remedy for all the spiritual wounds and diseases of our souls. If they labour under any, it is owing to a neglect or abuse of this antidote; hence, such great disorders in the manners of so many christians. "The wound, and bruise, and swelling are not bound up, nor cured with a medicine, nor cherished with oil." Isa. i. "Full of wounds, full of pains, full of sickness, no one approaches. Is there no healing resin in Galaad; or is there not a physician? Why therefore is not the scar of the daughter of my people covered and skinned over." Jer. viii. These loving complaints of God are much more applicable to the neglect of the balsam of penance in the new law than in the old.

This made Christ cry out, with a feeling of sense of such an insensibility and ingratitude, that by it his passion, and the great medicines he had composed of his own precious blood, were made fruitless in many. "I have laboured in vain," says this true lover of sinners and the Redeemer of their souls, for which he had done and suffered so much; "it is without fruit and without cause that I have spent my strength." Isa. xlix.

6. A frequent use of the sacrament of penance is the greatest preservative against sin, and this many ways. The ingredients or parts of which it is composed, on the penitent's side, are of themselves the most noble acts of the virtue of penance, and the most powerful strengtheners of the soul; viz. a most diligent examen, the most careful contrition and firm resolution against even all dangers and occasions of sin, and the repentant confession of sin. Each of these acts is, even singly, of great virtue and efficacy against the contagion of evil. How much more so all joined together? And, whereas at other times they are generally formed with less care and fervour, in the preparation for the sacrament the utmost diligence is used to make them in the most perfect manner. To them we must add the great advantages of the exhortations, instructions, and advice of a skilful master and director in the spiritual warfare, under a special promise of the extraordinary benediction of God, who has ordained the priests as physicians of our souls.

7. As it is a sacrament, it is a proper means of the grace of strength. Where are we to seek this grace but in its source, and by the channels, through which Almighty God has been pleased to ordain it should flow for our use? It belongs to him, who is the author and giver of this treasure, to choose the method of its conveyance, and to prescribe the conditions, on which he is pleased to bestow it; which he has done in the institution of this holy sacrament. This is its overflowing fountain from which we are frequently to fill our weak and sickly souls. "Here you shall draw water with joy from the fountains of your Saviour." Isa. xii. 3.

But we must not imagine, that the only effect of this sacrament is barely to heal our wounds; its advantages would in this case have been imperfect; for it would be little profit to rise from sin so as immediately to fall again, which would be even worse than not to rise at all. But the works and mercies of Christ exist not by halves. In this sacrament he dispenses grace both to heal and raise up our souls, and also to preserve and support them. If then we are weak, if we live amidst dangers, and in an air in which our spiritual forces are continually decaying, unless we are careful always to repair and renew them, and this even faster than they are impaired, we ought to recruit them by all the means put into our hands, and especially by the frequent diligent use of this source of the grace of spiritual strength. Our crafty enemy very well understands how formidable we are made to him by it; he is therefore most industrious to withdraw us from it, labouring to inspire an aversion and disgust of it, and to exaggerate pretended difficulties in its application.

8. Experience shows that vice makes very quick progress in a soul, which neglects frequent confession out of sloth or a vain fear of it. This barrier being once removed, the passions rush headlong in a manner without constraint or bridle to hold them in. The protestants, soon after their new communion was set up, found a general neglect of daily prayer, and an almost universal depravation of manners visible amongst them, as Luther and Calvin themselves complain in their writings. And Doctor

Bristow observes, that it was not only the observation of Erasmus, but the common remark also of every one in England, that, as men joined them, they became more loose in their morals. Motiv. 47. Hence the virtuous were strangely disturbed and afflicted to see ignorance, sloth in virtue, and even bare-faced immorality reign in so horrible a manner. Diar. Col. Angl. Duac. t. 2. p. 19. Indeed, they had abolished fasting, states of perfection and perpetual continency, and other means of curbing the passions; but they themselves owned, that the principal source of the disorders prevalent among them was the want of confession. This the French Calvinists solemnly acknowledged, when several of their cities petitioned their leaders that it might be restored, at least by a human law, for the public benefit; alleging that, since it had been set aside, probity, trust, restitution of injustices, &c. were very rare amongst them, and scarcely to be found. See Ste. Marthe and Bourdaloue, 13 Sund. after Pent. The Lutherans in Germany confessed the same. Dominic Soto being then confessor to the emperor Charles V. and in Germany, writes thus of them, in 4 dist. 18. qu. 1. art. 1. "They declared this publicly in my presence. Upon this account, the illustrious city of Nurembreg went so far as to send an embassy to the Emperor, requesting that auricular confession might be established amongst them by an imperial law; saying, they had learned by experience, that, since it had been laid aside amongst them, their commonwealth abounded with sins against justice, and other vices before unknown. The petition only moved the court to laughter, as if an imperial law could compel men to a confession of the secrets of their consciences." It is observed by a protestant author, that the Mahometans of Algiers love best Catholic slaves, and are very careful that they go often to confession; persuaded that this makes them faithful, honest, obedient, and virtuous.

9. An author of great learning and uncommon experience in the conduct of souls gives us these remarks and advice upon this head.[a] If you do not frequent ordinary confession, it is absolutely impossible to keep yourself long in the path of virtue, or to disengage yourself from vice and the way of perdition. This is an undoubted truth, which experience makes manifest. First, without frequent confession, venial sin will be multiplied, and lead to mortal, and "there was no hand to root out." Secondly, you will be secretly engaged in wicked courses and habits. If children are not taught to practise it when young, we generally afterwards bewail their misfortune, when they are found to have been early entangled in bad habits through the want of it. Thirdly, it is impossible you should live long without meeting temptations; I maintain says this pious author, that it is impossible you should long resist them without the frequent use of this means, and I appeal to experience for proof. If you neglect this great and easy means, you will never make use of others harder, which might supply the defect of this, now that example makes them so very uncommon. Fourthly, this is the remedy and help given by God against sin, as a sacrament instituted to give that grace. It also causes a true detestation of sin and resolutions of amendment to be renewed. The admonitions of a confessor awaken you, and encourage you to shun sin, and be faithful in your good purposes. Nor are they like the general instructions of sermons, but particularly adapted to your

[a] Gobinet's Instruct. of Youth, t. 1.

exigencies, and received at a time when you are best disposed and prepared to listen to and profit most by them. By him you will be helped to learn the means of resisting temptations, and shunning dangerous occasions. Nay, the very discovering of temptations is in itself an effectual remedy to overcome them. The devil fears nothing so much as their being laid open.

Confess yourself once a week, fortnight, or at least a month, as advised. Confess oftener, when assaulted by more frequent temptations. It is a fault of many not to confess sooner, unless they have yielded. "Apply the remedy before the disease." Eccl. xv. If you have fallen, confess speedily. Always confess to your ordinary confessor, if you can. If he be absent, go to another rather than miss. Be faithful in all these rules. The devil will use all endeavours to make you break them suggesting that it is at present too great a trouble, that you are indisposed, not prepared, or a thousand other obstacles. But never let any thing, except absolute impossibility, make you defer confession longer than usual, or than the circumstances mentioned require. All the faithful are bound by the church precept, under the threat of excommunication, (Conc. Lat. 4, omnis utriusque sexus, Conc. t. 11, p. 72,) if they are arrived at the age of discretion, to confess their sins to their pastor at least once a year. The council of Trent recommends confession more diligently in Lent, Sess. 14, cap. 5. If any one has deferred this beyond a year, he is bound to satisfy immediately, and every new delay is a new sin. Children are obliged by this precept, as they are capable of sinning, commonly when about seven years of age.

DISCOURSE XXXIII.

AGAINST A FEAR OF CONFESSION.

1. THE confession of sin is a powerful remedy, the best means to procure necessary advice, the greatest comfort of the mind, and, by God's appointment, the indispensable condition for a pardon. It is, in the first place, the grand remedy of sin. Prayer, fasting, and other mortifications are great and necessary means to free us from that evil. But of all others, confession is the shortest, the most easy, and the most powerful for this effect, as the most skilful directors agree and experience makes manifest; for nothing so much weakens the power, which the devil had acquired over a soul by sin, as an humble declaration of it in a penitent confession; and, on the other side, nothing so much strengthens the soul, and repairs her lost forces. Hence the devil fears nothing so much as to be discovered, being assured that he shall remain in the quiet possession of his prey as long as he can remain concealed. He therefore, employs all his stratagems to with-hold a soul in a state of sin from the confession of her guilt, the humiliation of which discovery he often is not able to withstand. It always wounds and weakens him; and sometimes alone suffices entirely to vanquish him and put him to flight. How many souls have found themselves at once freed by it from the most troublesome and dangerous temptations, which had obstinately resisted all other remedies?

Cassian tells us, Coll. 2, c. 11, of a certain young monk tempted to steal meat, to eat before the time of refection in his monastery, who, by the advice of his abbot Serapion confessing his weakness, found himself suddenly delivered from that annoyance. See the like examples in St. John Climacus, gr. 4.

2. Holy confession is also a voluntary humiliation, to which the guilty soul condemns herself by her own free choice; it is one of the principal, yet the shortest and easiest actions of exterior penance; a great and cheap means of satisfaction and atonement for sin; a complete victory over pride and self-love, and over the devil and his artifices. St. Gregory the great says of it; (Mor. l. 22, n. 34, c. 15, t. 1, p. 714.) "On account of the shame, it is often a greater conflict to confess sins committed than not to fall into them; and, although it be a greater courage to avoid a fault, the confession of it is an exercise of a greater humility." God, who is a lover of the humble, is extremely pleased with this humiliation. He accepts it therefore, as a most agreeable sacrifice of expiation, and rewards it with his strongest healing graces, permitting the proud concealer of his guilt to wallow in his mire.

3. This confession is made to one, who will be full of compassion for our miseries, and will weep with us for them, will teach us the methods of conquering them, and prescribe the most proper remedies against them, who will, by his counsel, advice, and prayers, labour jointly with us to remove all the impediments of our spiritual progress, and to promote our good and our easier and more perfect advancement in virtue. Our body is moved and governed by the soul; nor is our soul to be governed by itself, but by the spirit of God. Its own lights are clouded, as to itself, by its passions, and by a secret fund of pride and self-love, which no one can be so perfectly freed from, as to be an impartial searcher and judge of the motions of his own heart, in which he would of himself often palliate and excuse what is criminal, mistake passions for virtues, and the illusions of the enemy, who often transforms himself into an angel of light, for inspirations of the Holy Ghost and the will of God. But if he humbly distrust himself, and lays open his interior to be governed by a spiritual director, he will be out of all such danger, and will be wonderfully enlightened and assisted by God in choosing and walking in the true paths of virtue without stumbling. He will learn from him to discover the devil's most subtle arts and wiles; will be instructed in the dangerous occasions of sin, and in the means of flying them; will be animated and encouraged under dejections; excited and spurred on under sloth, and taught the whole art of his spiritual warfare, and assisted every way in the safe paths to his heavenly country.

4. A good use of confession is likewise a practice most comfortable to our souls, as by it we have the incredible advantage of the advice and assistance of a faithful disinterested friend, and a sure guide given us by God himself. Every body knows, particularly those who have most experienced it, how great a treasure and comfort it is, in temporal affairs of great importance and difficulty, to find a faithful, affectionate, close, and able friend to advise with. The affair of salvation is, beyond all comparison, the most important, the most intricate, and most dangerous of all concerns; and in it we meet with continual scruples, fears, and perils. What a comfort then must it be to a soul, fearful to offend God and lose herself eternally, to be provided with such a friend as cannot be found in

any temporal affairs, by whose advice she can safely resolve all her doubts, and remove her perplexities; whose entire secrecy she can absolutely depend upon; to whom she can with confidence disclose all her misfortunes and all her fears, and by whose mouth God assures her, that it is he who speaks to her. Of this an ingenious author, who has been taken by some for the great St. Augustin, l. de amico, c. 4. writes thus; "What an happiness, what a security, what a pleasure is it to have one, with whom you can as freely discourse concerning your most private motions as you can consider them yourself within your own breast, to whom you are not afraid to confess, if you have offended; to whom you are not ashamed to discover any thing of your spiritual progress; to whom you can commit all the secrets of your heart? What can be more comfortable than closely to unite an able friend's soul with our own, and to make but one of two; so that neither shame, nor flattery, nor deceit can be feared or suspected? 'A friend is the remedy of life,' says the Wise-man, Eccl. vi. 16. There can be no stronger or more powerful remedy to all our wounds, or help in all our wants than to have one to relieve us with compassion in every difficulty, to assist us with congratulation in every advantage; so that, joining his shoulders, he bears all my burthens with me, and bears his own injuries lighter than mine."

5. It is also a great comfort to procure ease of mind and conscience, the effect of confession. St. Gregory the great observes, Mor. l. 7. c. ult. that persons, who conceal their griefs within themselves, suffer more severely from them; for they are allayed by being let out. Sores are painful as long as the abscess remains covered, but grow easy when they are opened. Sin is, as it were, a spiritual imposthume, which never ceases to fret and torture till it be laid open; but the lancet has no sooner let out the corruption, with which it was swoln, than the sweetest ease is immediately felt. The wound of conscience continues to torment more and more, the longer it is smothered; but, the sharper its pain, the greater pleasure will it be to be delivered from it, by showing it to the physician, who will not fail to effect the cure.

In troublesome scruples, disquietudes, or temptations, this same means is of great relief. St. Francis of Sales observes upon this head, that the wholesome council of St. Lewis to his son was: If you have trouble in your heart, tell it presently to your confessor or some friend, and you will bear the grief very easily by the comfort he shall give you. This experience teaches, to the incredible comfort and help of pious souls.

6. Confession moreover is the necessary condition to obtain a pardon; so indispensable in case of mortal sin, that nothing can exempt from its obligation, but an impossibility, in which case the sincere desire of complying with this precept is requisite. Let a sinner multiply his fasts, his alms, and his prayers; let him travel over the world in sackcloth and ashes, and in the conversion of nations; nothing will prevail with God, unless he satisfy this his absolute precept of confessing and submitting his guilt to the tribunal of the church. Ah! if confession should seem severe to a soul not accustomed to its sweetness, let her represent to herself hell and a miserable eternity; and all conditions of a pardon will appear light, and even pleasant. But could the mercy of God have insisted upon less? In temporal courts how cheaply would a criminal think he purchased his life, if he could save it, even by publicly acknowledging his guilt with protestations of sorrow? God requires only that the sinner confess under the

greatest secrecy, with dispositions of repentance. He prescribes only this condition, in itself the most easy, the most comfortable, and the most advantageous possible; such a one as that we ought to praise the goodness of God without ceasing, for furnishing us with the means of practising it under so secure and inviolable a seal. "I have frequently admonished you," says St. Cæsarius, "and I again and again admonish you, that whosoever has suffered shipwreck under the storm of his passions and lusts, quickly do lay hold on confession as the plank to save his broken vessel. He must loudly lament himself dead to God, and weep over his lost soul." Serm. 61, App. St. Aug. 260, t. 5, p. 426.

7. A soul which, lying under pressing spiritual evils and dangers, conceals her misery out of fear or shame, and shuns or defers them to her physician by an open confession, may be said to be spiritually dumb. In corporal possession by evil spirits that is the most cruel and dangerous, in which the fiend has so far made himself master as to have seized on the very organs of the voice, so that the unhappy person is not able to speak or to give an answer, like the dumb demoniac in the gospel. Luke xi. 13. So it is in the spiritual possessions of a soul. If the enemy has obtained so absolute an empire over her as to deprive her of the spiritual use of her speech, by inspiring her with a horror and fear of confession, he holds her securely and peaceably in his possession, and fears not being disturbed. For a man to be in a state of mortal sin and a child of hell is a misfortune so frightful, that no tears can sufficiently bewail it, no tongue express, nor finite understanding conceive it. But if he be so far captivated by the devil, as wilfully to suffer him to exercise his tyranny over his voice, the only means of seeking relief left him is something more horrible, in some degree, than the state of damnation itself. For, whereas it is God who refuses the means of reconciliation to the damned soul, the dumb sinner, by a wilful obstinacy, deprives himself of the most powerful means of pardon, which the mercy of God offers him, nay presses upon him; yet by his criminal contempt and abuse of it, he adds, every hour that he lives, to the enormous increase of his guilt, and to the treasure of wrath.

8. What are the artifices, by which the devil studies to give sinners a dread of confession? Chiefly these four: a fear of the trouble of a careful confession; an apprehension of severe penances; an unwillingness to renounce some favourite passion; and a base shame of confessing. As to the first, the difficulties of confession are chiefly imaginary. It appears frightful at a distance to those, who are unacquainted with it; but, when they approach, they will find it surprisingly easy and comfortable. Confession indeed requires care and earnest application; but can a reconciliation with God be hoped for, unless it be sued for with earnestness? Men who are so eager and laborious in their temporal concerns, who count fatigues in them as pleasures, are afraid of the least pains for so great a good. This can arise only from their sloth and supine indifference in the affair of their salvation. Let them seriously seek it, and they will never look upon the pains of making a good confession as a hard task.

9. Some are afraid of satisfaction and a severe penance. Alas! a delay will increase their guilt, and the debts, which must be satisfied here or hereafter. What senseless madness to refuse the tribunal of mercy to choose that of rigour and justice! not remembering that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb. x. Let such per-

sons consider the malice of sin, what Christ suffered to expiate it, what penances were enjoined in the primitive ages, compared with the present discipline of the church, &c. But the minister of the sacrament will use all possible condescension to their weakness; he will remit the greater part to their own free choice and endeavours, or at least will defer it till they by fervour are better able to bear it or through a zealous charity will, by his own prayers and mortifications, labour to supply what their weakness thinks too heavy, in imitation of St. Francis Xavier. Never then let this foolish imaginary fear and base sloth deter sinners from approaching the sacrament of mercy.

10. In some, this dread of confession arises from a secret unwillingness to abandon some darling passion, or some favourite occasion of sin, of being obliged to restore unjust acquisitions, to pardon enemies, or the like; that is to say, they are afraid of confession, because they are unwilling to renounce sin, and consequently shun that, which would compel them to break their chains. How criminal is it thus openly to prefer the slavery of the devil to the sweets and advantages of the service of God! What an affront do such souls offer to the blood of Christ? What a base and ungrateful return is this to God's most merciful calls? What a contempt of the holy sacrament? Let such souls consider the just judgements, which fall on presumptuous abuses of grace, and on impenitent and delaying sinners. Ah! before they are yet overtaken by them, let them without further delay lay open their wounds to their physician. By the grace which attends humble confession, by their examen and good resolutions, and by the prayers, advice, and encouragement of God's ministers, they will find their difficulties vanished, their clouds scattered, themselves wonderfully enlightened and strengthened and what they before feared now become their joy and their happiness. But the more ordinary engine, by which the devil draws sinners from confession, is a senseless shame, which makes some fly the sacrament, and others, with greater impiety, hypocritically approach it, sacrilegiously concealing part of their guilt.

This shall be the subject of our next discourse.

DISCOURSE XXXIV.

AGAINST THE SHAME OF CONFESSING OUR SINS.

1. THE shame of confessing our sins is most base, criminal, and senseless; for it draws on certain, eternal, and real confusion; it is the shame of what is glorious and honourable; nor is this confession a publication of sins, being made under the most inviolable seal of secrecy only to Christ and his minister, our charitable parent and physician. It is a clear article of our faith, that we must either confess our sins privately as penitents before God's minister on earth, or give up all hopes of our ever obtaining pardon for them; we must either be our own voluntary accusers, discovering them in an honourable and glorious repentance under the seal of confession, or one day see them laid open in their full deformity before the universe, to our eternal confusion. Is it not better voluntarily to undergo the confusion of our sin, than bear the shame of the sentence

of eternal reprobation; for, as St. Augustin says;[a] "If you will not confess, you will be condemned confessed. You fear to confess, who by not confessing cannot be hid. You will be condemned silent, who could be delivered by confessing." And St. Pacian thus addresses himself to such bashful sinners, impudent to offend, but ashamed to repent: "Shall the sinner fear? Shall he be ashamed to purchase eternal life by present confusion? Will he withdraw back his sore wounds from God, who offers his healing hand?" Paræn. ad pœn. Is it not better to blush before one man, under the strictest laws of secrecy, than at the last day in the sight of heaven and earth, covered then with the justest and most insupportable shame and reproach? Confusion is the just punishment of sin; if it be any to confess, is not this to be cheerfully undergone as most deserved, and as small and nothing in comparison of the eternal and insupportable confusion in hell, which is due to sin? Is it not to be suffered as a remedy of so great an evil? Tertullian observes, that this is a more irrational and base shame than if a patient should choose rather to perish than discover some shameful wound in his body to the physician. He says also, considering that this shame does not hide them from their judge and God; "The concealment of their sin promises them a great advantage indeed, as if we could also hide it from God if we did from men. Is it better to lurk condemned than to be publicly absolved?" De pœnit. c. 10.

2. This shame will appear the most groundless, if we consider that confession is glorious and honourable. Almighty God, as St. Chrysostom remarks, annexed shame to sin that it might be a fence and barrier against it; but the devil inverts the order of things, and labours to inspire an impudent boldness to sin, and a shame of repentance than which nothing can be more impious or more senseless. As it is most base and shameful to sin, so is it most glorious and worthy of the greatest praise to repent and confess. "There is a confusion bringing glory and grace." Eccl iv. 26. This confession is the complete victory and triumph over the devil; it is a virtue, and most glorious in the sight of God and his whole court, which it fills with joy and exultation. "There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance," Luke xv. 10. The good shepherd himself exults for the recovery of his lost sheep; the tender father invites all his friends, and celebrates a festival, upon the return of his prodigal son. Christ's minister on earth enters into some degree of share in the joy of his divine master, and mingles his tears of joy with the penitential tears of the returning sinner, contemplating, at every word of his humble accusation of himself, the devils vanquished and flying from his heart. This confession rescues him from the tyranny of sin, cleanses and beautifies his soul, and is the date of his glory and happiness, by making him begin to live to God.

But it seems a confusion to confess a man's secret crimes. It is true, if the sinner do it to glory in them, or to persevere in their malice; but here he confesses them, covered with confusion at their sight, and filled with a holy detestation of them; he confesses them only to destroy and efface them. They therefore subsist no more. A sinner indeed he was; but by his repentance his sins are blotted out, and their stains quite washed away; he is

[a] Si non confessus lates, confessus damnaberis. Times confiteri, qui non confitendo esse non potes occultus: damnaberis tacitus, qui posses liberari confessus. In Ps. 66, t. 3, p. 660.

now no longer the same man, being by a happy transformation gloriously changed by this very confession. Who does not admire David, or Mary Magdalen in their repentance? What they had been is no more; we consider all that no more in them; but only what they now are, and what the glory, the honour, the merit, and eternal advantage of their penance are? Nay, the greater the crimes and miseries of sinners had been, the greater is the triumph and joy of their deliverance to all lovers of God and of souls. Their confession and repentance will shine with incomparable lustre at the last day and to eternity, as a great virtue and crown in holy penitents; their sins will appear no more except as effaced. In their stead, glorious penance will appear as a precious embroidery and tissue, formed from the blood of Christ, adorning the souls; as a stain on a garment, covered over with a jewel or embroidery much richer than the stuff, becomes an ornament. "Ah! be ashamed to commit sin; but who can be ashamed of that work, by which he is made just? Who can be ashamed to confess his sins to efface them? For does God command you to confess your sins that he may punish you? No; but to blot them out. Not as in earthly tribunals, in which confession is followed by punishment;" exclaims St. Chrysostom, Hom. quod non sit in gratiam concion. t. 2, p. 663.

3. But to whom are we commanded to confess our sins? Not in a theatre, or in public; not to be divulged or rebuked; but by the priest to God, who knows them before, who will not reproach us for them, or receive us with harshness or severity; to him who is the lover of penitent souls? "Why do I fear to confess?" says St. Ambrose? "Why do I fear to tell my sins? Why do I apprehend any disgrace or reproach by declaring them before him, whose judgments are sweet? What would be severe in others, is sweet in Christ, because he is all sweetness and mildness." In Ps. 118, Octon. 5, p. 1459. We indeed confess to the priest, but only as God's minister and vicegerent in his name; this also under the strictest ties of secrecy, so that he can never make use of any knowlege of sin, or any circumstance ever so small, acquired from sacramental confession, on any account whatsoever, unless to pray privately for the penitent, or study for his advantage. The least revelation by word or sign, directly or indirectly, would be a most heinous crime, first, against the law of nature, as every thing in confession is spoken under the tie of the strictest natural secret; secondly, against the divine law, which by instituting the law of confession commanded most inviolably this severe entire secrecy, without which the precept of confessing is annulled, and penitents deterred from the use, and even exempted from the obligation of it; for no one is bound to confess his sin, if he cannot do it without a hazard of its being revealed, as divines agree.[a] Thirdly, against the laws of the church, which by the severest canons condemn any priest guilty of it to be desposed and shut up for life. The civil courts in Catholic countries condemn him to death; and we read of one burnt at Toulouse for that crime.[b] Such a disclosure therefore would be a manifold grievous sin against the fidelity of a natural secret, against justice, charity and obedience to the canons of the church, and a dreadful sacrilege against the divine law and institution of this sacrament, which it tends to make void, and to deprive the church of. This is a more heinous sin than any, which the penitent could have com-

[a] See Suar. in 3 disp. 23, sect. 2.
[b] Raymondus hist. n. 13, p. 604, t. 17.

mitted, says Pope Innocent III. Serm. 3, de con. more enormous than that of the traitor Judas, says St. Anthony of Padua, Serm. 2. in Dom 1. Quadr. Hence a priest cannot make any use of confessional knowledge, in excluding unworthy persons from holy orders or offices; nor in the government of his house such use could never be suspected; for such a principle would at least make the sacrament odious and impracticable;[a] nor in any way to consult his own indemnity or secure his life; nor even to preserve the public. Hence it was not lawful (as reported) for F. Garnet to disclose the treason, which had been discovered to him only in sacramental confession, though he was bound by all means to draw the accomplices from it, and to refuse them absolution even by obliging them to impeach any obstinate associates, whom they could not avert by other means. When Henry IV. of France would compel the Jesuits to subscribe a declaration, that in cases of high treason a confessor could, and consequently was obliged to make a disclosure, Father Coton convinced that prince, that such a practice would even hurt the state; for, as no one would confess such things, priests could never avert them by dissuasion and admonitions. Nor can any dispensation be granted by any authority whatsoever, in any case possible, to allow such a revelation. Not only the priest is bound by this seal of secrecy, but also an interpreter of another's confession, or whoever, by being too near, should over-hear any part of it, or one to whom it should be related by others. Even a person who has been at confession, if he went privately to conceal it, though not otherwise, falls under the seal.[b] A written confession, to help the memory, cannot be read or revealed, without a grievous mortal sin, as it is a violation of a strict secret; many divines even think it a violation of the sacramental seal. Though, for fear of scandals and accidents, no penitent, ought to keep such written confessions long by him, or leave them exposed; as they might be an occasion of many sins and evil consequences.[c] Although the penitent is not on his side bound by this sacramental seal, yet he ought to conceal, as a natural secret whatsoever his director has with the confidence of a secret said to him; as also the penance enjoined him, which, if discovered, would often give scandal, create suspicions or other evils. By such sacred barriers has Christ secured the inviolable secret of confession that this most comfortable and profitable means of satisfaction might be made easy to sinners; and he watches over the conservation of its seal with a singular providence. Indeed the most abandoned apostate would still be too jealous of his own reputation to break it, and, were he so impious, certainly he could deserve no credit with any one. But we have no such example. "It is unheard of that sins heard by confession should be divulged, lest others should be deterred from confessing, and all hope of the recovery of their health should be cut off," says St. John Climacus, ep. ad Pastor. c. 13. God would even, to guard his sacrament, give his minister more easily the courage of St. John Nepomucen, the martyr of this seal, who chose rather to die than to violate it at the command of an enraged tyrant. No; the pious confessor will be so scrupulously careful as to this most indispensable precept, that what he hears or sees otherwise, he will endeavour to be blind and dumb in, least the sacramental knowledge should inadvertently

[a] See the Definitions of Clement VIII. anno 1594, and of Innocent XI. anno 1682.
[b] Nesseu La Croix, &c.
[c] Of which M. Brainvilliers at Paris, anno 1676, was an unjust example.

insinuate itself; so that he may say with a celebrated ancient pastor: "What I know by confession, I know less than what I do not know at all."[a]

4. What must increase our confidence in confession is, that we declare our sins to a man encompassed with weakness like ourselves, to one who is our faithful and charitable friend, and our tender father. We confess not to a cherub or a seraph, to one impeccable and unacquainted with the infirmities of our nature, but to a man and a sinner like ourselves, surrounded with the same dangers with us, and who, by the experience of his own frailty, cannot but have compassion on those who are ignorant, and because he himself also is encompassed with infirmity. Heb. v. 2. We confess to one, who acknowledges himself to be also a sinner, and places his own hopes in this plank of confession; who, perhaps, owns himself to be a greater sinner than we are, or at least knows that he lives in the same dangers, and is preserved from worse evils only by the grace of God, and regards himself always as weaker and more ungrateful and unworthy than we are; consequently, who cannot look upon us with eyes of contempt and aversion, but with tenderness, compassion, and affection. He knows that Christ, his prince and his model, made it his delight to converse with and to receive sinners; and that he spilt his blood only to save them. He knows that David and the publican were saints in a moment; the chief pastor St. Peter was permitted to fall, to teach all other shepherds of souls to treat repenting sinners with mildness, considering that they themselves might be likewise tempted and fall. Who can be ashamed to confess penitently his sins amongst sinners and to sinners? "Are you then afraid to do this in the church—where we ought only to be ashamed not to confess as we are all sinners; where he is the more commendable, who is the more humble; he the more just, who is the meaner in his own eyes," says St. Ambrose, l. 2. de. pœnit. c. 10. Another devout author cries out; "He who hears your sins is a sinner like you, and perhaps a greater: he is a man differing in nothing from me. Why then do you fear, O sinner to confess to a man and a sinner? Confess, O my brethren; defer it not. Hasten to the secret harvest of confession. This is the salvation of souls, the dissipatress of vice the restorer of virtues, the conqueror of devils, the terror of hell, the confidence of the churches, the safety, leader, staff, light, and hope of all faithful. O holy and admirable confession! Thou shuttest hell's gates, and openest those of paradise. O confession, life of the just, glory of sinners! Thou art indispensably necessary to the sinner, and the just will also embrace and frequent thee. And nothing shall remain in judgment, which shall have been perfectly cleansed by confession." St. Aug. Serm. 30, ad. Fr. in eremo, t. 6, App. p. 336.

5. A confessor is also, by his office and by his charity, our close and faithful friend given to us by God, to whom our souls cannot but be most dear. The very confidence we repose in him, whereby we discover to him all the secrets of our souls, which we would not disclose to a brother or parent, must particularly engage his tenderness and affection, for us. And the deeper our wounds, the greater our miseries and dangers have been, the greater will be his compassion; the more fervent his tears to God for us; the more feeling his affection towards us; and the greater his joy for our deliverance; in the same manner as parents are more affected

[a] Quæ per confessionem scio minus scio quam quæ nescio. St. Aug. Serm. 30, ad fratr. in eremo, t. 6, App. p. 336.

towards a son, whom they have seen in great danger. Gerson writes thus upon this subject; "Some will, perhaps, fear I shall feel in my heart certain emotions of anger, disdain, or aversion from his confession. Nothing less. I shall rather love him more tenderly as my dearest son. I feel in my heart, that I am more affected towards those, whom I see drawn out of great evils and dangers, than towards those, who were less wounded. Nor should I ever entertain any the least sentiments of hatred and revenge for the confession of any crime whatsoever, were it even the death of my own parent." L. de parvulis tract. ad Christ. p, 35. These are merely the dispositions of every pious confessor towards his penitents. Those whose dangers are greater, discover a greater confidence in him by their confession, and by their miseries awaken his tenderness more strongly.

He is moreover their spiritual father, and they are his joy, his glory, and his crown. Those alone, who understand how far the bands of the spirit exceed the strictest alliances of the flesh, can be sensible what are the feelings of a zealous and charitable pastor towards his children in Christ, and with what tenderness and regard in his heart he treats them under all their evils. Whence St. Gregory of Nyssa, or rather, as Photius attests, his contemporary St. Asterius of Amasa, in his homily against those who judge harshly, p. 619, speaks thus: "Place a greater confidence in the priest, thy parent in God, than in those, who are thy corporal parents. Discover to him boldly thy secrets. Disclose the most occult thoughts of thy soul, as hidden wounds to the physician. He will have a regard both for thy honour and for thy health. Parents are more moved at the disgrace of their children than the children themselves."

6. As the devil deters some from confession by a foolish shame, so by the same stratagem he sometimes draws others into an evil still far more grievous, which is to conceal or disguise some mortal sin, or aggravating circumstances, in their confession. This is a sacrilege of the first rate, and a base ingratitude; a lying to the Holy Ghost, and transgressing the most sacred command of Christ; a shameful hypocrisy, and a most extravagant folly. We measure the enormity of a sacrilege by the holiness of the thing abused by it; for, the more sacred this is, and the higher degree of sanctity and grace it contains, so much the more grievous is a sacrilegious profanation of it. Now, the sacraments of the new law are the most holy of all the mysteries of our divine religion, as they are the proper vessels of the most precious blood of Christ, and the instruments, by which its merits and fruits are communicated to us; therefore, an abuse of them is a direct and most horrible profanation of the adorable blood of Christ, and the infinite price of our redemption, and an enormous injury done to religion, the most holy mysteries of which are thus contumeliously trampled upon.

The blessed eucharist being the most sacred of the sacraments, an unworthy communion is to be deemed the greatest of these sacrileges; yet the sacrament of penance being the richest and most powerful effort of the divine mercy for the remission of sins, which was the principal object of Christ's passion, a contempt of it is a sacrilege of a particular malice, ruining directly the ends of Christ's sufferings. How pathetically may we consider our sweetest Redeemer expostulating with such an ungrateful soul upon the designs of his infinite mercy, and the great end of his labour, sweats, torments, and blood made void and wilfully profaned by it! Is it

possible that any one could be knowingly capable of such a sacrilege? could repay such infinite goodness with so black an ingratitude? could be so impious as to provoke God by the very means instituted to appease him and at the very time he is pretending to atone for past sins?

7. This crime is not only a sacrilege, it is also a lie to the Holy Ghost. All lying is detested by all men for its baseness; and even liars themselves can never bear that reproach, which is looked upon as the highest affront, and never to be borne. It is infinitely more hateful to God, as it is contrary to his very essence, which is "truth;" but to lie to God's minister, sitting and acting in his name and authority is to lie to God himself. Thus Ananias and Saphira, lying to St. Peter as his minister and vicar, are said to have lied to the Divine Majesty in person: "Why hath Satan tempted thy heart that thou shouldest lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God." Acts v. 3, 4, for which both were struck dead at the apostle's feet, to serve as an example of terror to all succeeding ages, and to show the enormity of seeking to impose upon God in his vicegerents. Yet their lie was in a thing of much less moment than is the matter of his sacrament,* it having been relative only to an alms, which, or at least the obligation of it, was of their own free choice. Here it is told in the act of a most holy sacrament, in the most solemn contract which a creature can make with her God, and with a violation of his most express and severe precept. He commands the confession to be sincere and entire. The sinner by presenting himself in the sacred tribunal, declares he will make such a confession, and lay open his whole guilt to God's minister, in order to obtain a pardon by fulfilling the conditions, which it has pleased God in his mercy to prescribe; yet he disguises his guilt by a shameless lie against his own protestations, and against God's express command. Did Christ sit as our judge visible before us, could any sinner have the boldness to lie to his face? To lie in confession, is to lie to him in his minister and representative. St. Ambrose observes, (l. de parad. c. 14, p. 166,) that Cain seems to have sinned more grievously by denying his crime to God by a lie, saying: I know not, than he had by the murder of his brother; and therefore, as he sought to conceal his guilt, the devil was constituted his accuser, with the voice of his own conscience, and he was justly excluded from the grace of pardon; but a lie told in the sacrament seems to exceed the malice of Cain, as it is delivered in a more sacred and solemn manner, and is an abuse of the very means of pardon, which it employs to insult God with.

8. This lie in confession is moreover an act of the basest hypocrisy, as its object is to cover impenitence and sin by the most holy sacrament. The sinner boldly appears in the sacred tribunal as an humble sincere penitent, under the cloak of a feigned humility, and assumes the air and words of innocence and simplicity only to impose upon God's minister, and counterfeit the saint in his eyes, far more worthy to be crushed with thunderbolts, or struck dead at his feet than were Ananias and Saphira; but his crime deserves to be reserved for much greater punishment; for he deceives his judge, whom he acknowledges as representing God himself, and annuls his sacred sentence and judgment.

9. This proceeding is the most extravagant madness and folly, as well as impiety. For what is the sinner ashamed of? Is it not of having

* Unless with some, we believe that this was in sacramental confession—EDITOR.

been what St. Peter, what David were? Let him consider St. Austin, Magdalen, and all other penitent saints. When he sees them publish their sins, can he be still afraid of imitating their example? "David confesses his sin publicly, and do not you acknowledge yours?" exclaims St. Ambrose in Ps. 118, Octon, 5, t. 1, p. 1159. Job, the holy Job, would not conceal his iniquity in his bosom, ch. 31. and a wretched sinner is afraid of being ranked amongst penitents, who ought only to blush at his pride. But whilst he thus imposes upon his confessor, can he impose upon God? That is what he does not so much as flatter himself with. "If I refused to confess to thee, O Lord, to whose eyes the abyss of man's conscience is naked, what would be hidden in me from thee? For I should hide thee from me, not myself from thee."[a]

He flies from the knowledge of the priest indeed; but a knowledge, which is a more inviolable secret than even secrecy itself, and which can procure him the prayers, wholesome advice, and assistance of a tender charitable friend and parent, who says; "My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you." Gal. v. 19, a comfort and advantage, which we seek in all our pains and concerns of weight.

10. Yet by this groundless shame, and most accursed concealment, he stops the sentence of pardon, which God was ready and earnestly desirous to pronounce, and changes it into a sentence of condemnation. He exposes his salvation to the utmost danger, and plunges himself into most inextricable difficulties, both as to the time to come and for the present. As to the time to come; for this shame of confessing will increase and be strengthened by habit; also by the additional burden of this sacrilege and other crimes which must be all confessed at last, or no salvation can be hoped for. What folly! to refuse doing that now with a design of certainly doing it hereafter, with so many aggravating difficulties, and with the utmost hazard of never doing it at all, at least as it ought to be done.

11. It is attended also with present difficulties and evils; for, besides the multiplication of most grievous sins, what must be the anxiety, inward torture, and perplexity of such a sinner? He knows certainly, that he must at last confess this whole load of his guilt, or perish eternally without resource! yet the imaginary horror of confessing fills him with alarms and frights, little short of the agonies, with which the perpetual conscious ness of his guilt and the danger of his eternity never cease to disturb and tear his poor soul. Whatever he does, wheresoever he goes, these always pursue him; no company, pleasures, or occupations can silence or calm them. The more he seeks to dissipate his mind, the deeper will the thorn be struck in, and by length of time it but widens the wound and increases his pain and distemper. Oh! how speedily might he get rid of it? He has only to discover it to the surgeon, and it will be plucked out without pain: It is merely a silly imaginary fear, that deters him from it. St. Francis Xavier met a Portuguese in the Indies, who could not be induced to go to confession; the saint tenderly inquiring the cause of his pain, he named a sin, which he said he never could confess; St. Francis told him that, as he had already mentioned it, that difficulty was over; upon which the man was restored to tranquillity of mind, perceiving the illusion of those phantoms, which had represented confession, in such false colours. We read of a certain person of quality, who having committed a

[a] Te enim mihi absconderem, non me tibi; says St. Augustin, Confess. l. 10, c. 2.

grievous sin, thinking he could never resolve in himself to confess it, left nothing undone to make himself forget it. With this view, he abandoned himself to drinking and other excesses and pleasures, hoping that the multitude of his sins would at last blot it out of his memory; but in vain; that crime always remained the uppermost in his thoughts. He then had recourse to travelling, ran over many countries, and engaged himself in the greatest variety of affairs. All this being to no effect, he addicted himself to the mathematics and other studies, which particularly require attention. This expedient being also tried in vain, he bethought himself of another, which was to give large alms, practice the greatest mortifications, fasts, hair-shirts, disciplines, &c. but with no more success than he had employed the other means. Still not able to think of confessing it, he was at last reduced to despair, and resolved to hang himself. In this anxiety he met with a priest, who by his discourse perceived, that he laboured under great uneasiness of mind, and learning the case, and indirectly insinuating himself into his favour, named several enormous sins, asking the man, if his pain was not this or that. At last at the name of one the nobleman cried out; That is it; but I can never confess it. The priest told him that difficulty was over; he had but to confess other sins to him along with this. The unfortunate man, surprised to find his phantoms of fear all vanished, did so and recovered immediately inconceivable calm, joy, and peace of mind.

Sin is a load and torture to the soul, till she is eased of it by confession. Origen uses this comparison; "The divine scripture teaches, that we are not to conceal sin within ourselves. As they, who have their stomachs overcharged or filled with bad humours, are eased and freed from the dangerous consequences by a vomit; so those who, having sinned, retain its venom within themselves, suffer its tortures, and are almost suffocated by it: but if a man become his own accuser, and confesses his sin, he throws up the cause of his disease, and is relieved." Origen Hom. 2, in Ps. 37, p. 295. St. Augustin expresses the comfort, which confession gives to a wounded conscience, in these words: "You are sorrowful before you confess; having confessed, rejoice; you shall be healed; your conscience had gathered corruption; the imposthume was formed and swoln; it tormented you, and allowed you no rest. The physician applies fomentations of words, and sometimes cuts. You feel his hand. Confess; let all the corruption run and be poured out in confession. Now exult; now rejoice; what remains will be easily healed." St. Aug. in Ps. 66, n. 7, p. 661.

If then, I find myself tempted to shame in confessing any thing, I will raise my heart to God, earnestly imploring his assistance and strength; and without hesitation, deliberation, or study of any softening words, will boldly accuse myself of that, first of all, together with all its aggravating circumstances and malice, to gain a complete victory over this devil. If I seek to extenuate or excuse it, what a danger of lying to the Holy Ghost? What scruples, what anxieties, what trouble in confessing all again, will not be the consequence?

DISCOURSE XXXV.

ON THE CHOICE OF A CONFESSOR, AND ON A GENERAL CONFESSION.

1. MANY reasons show the necessity and advantage of a director in the service of God. The conduct of a man's conscience is, of all things, the most difficult, as in it often the darkness is great and storms are violent and frequent; so that it requires an extraordinary light and strength. It is therefore, a high degree of presumption and pride for any man to confide in his own sufficiency herein, without seeking the assistance of the most skilful and experienced guide possible. "Rely not on thy own prudence, says the Holy Ghost," Prov. iii. 5. He is called a fool, who trusts in his own heart. Prov. xxviii. 26. "For the way of fool is right in his eyes, but the wise man hearkens to counsel." Prov. xii. 15. He then, who desires to serve God, ought to commit his soul to the conduct of one, who will direct him in the right paths of virtue, warn him of his dangers, caution him against the false roads, which he is to shun, spur him on, when he walks too slow, and holds him in if he should attempt to run beyond his strength.

Again, no one can judge impartially and securely in his own case. Self-love, pride, and the whole brood of his passions will often disguise, smother, or misrepresent the truth to his eyes; and no degree of genius, learning, capacity, experience, or virtue, can ever secure a man from the imperceptible deceits of their prejudices. Hence, let a person be ever so enlightened, ever so fervent and perfect, if he trust in his own sufficiency, his virtue will be all built on pride and presumption, and the faster he runs, the faster he goes out of his way, like a traveller who has taken a wrong road. Hence the Wise-man lays down this rule: "Thou hast seen a man seem wise to himself; the fool has rather hopes than he." Prov. xxvi. 12. Gerson commends this saying of an ancient solitary; "If you see any advancing well, but without a guide, though he should already have one foot in heaven, pull him back; for he cannot enter."

2. It is only the grace of God, that must be our light and strength in the ways of virtue, in which we are not able to make one true step of ourselves; but, to root up the very seed of pride out of our hearts, God has annexed his grace to our obedience to the direction of others, and his providence has established this rule, that no one should be his own guide, as he hopes for his succours, but submit to the advice of an other in all difficulties; for humility and obedience are the two tests of virtue, the only security against illusion, and the means which draw down the benediction of heaven. Hence St. Augustin vehemently exhorts us to abhor the fatal temptation of following our own lights: "Let us beware, says he, of those most proud and most dangerous temptations, and rather remember that the apostle Paul, though converted and instructed by a voice yet was sent to a man Ananias; 'Go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do.' Acts ix. 7, and Cornelius the centurian, though an angel assured him his prayers were heard, yet was delivered to St. Peter to be instructed."[a] We see the most eminent saints, though the most

[a] Cæveamus tales tentationes superbissimas & periculosissimas, &c. St. Augustin, Præf, l. be doctr. christ. t. 3.

enlightened by God, and the most learned doctors, distrusting their own sentiments, and consulting and following others. This is the surest proof of souls being governed by the spirit of God, which always inspires this diffidence in themselves. By this, they steer securely through the darkness and tempests, which hide our road from our own eyes; as Joas walked in the paths of justice for the first forty years, whilst he followed his good director Joiada, but miserably fell as soon he would be his own guide. 4 Kings xii. 2.

3. The first thing necessary in a spiritual life is to seek a good director, as Tobias thus advised his son for his journey: "Seek to thyself some faithful man who may go with thee." Tob. v. 4. "If there be no comparison to a faithful friend, he who has found him has found a treasure." Eccl. vi. 14, 15. What an incomparable blessing is a good spiritual guide; a man, to whom we may communicate all our interior? Almighty God is to be earnestly besought to conduct us to such a one, as he sent his angel before his people to protect them, and lead them into his promised land. Exod. xxiii. 20. He is to be chosen not by human affection, nor one likely to be indulgent to our passions, or to flatter our inclinations; but a man of learning, able to distinguish leprosy and leprosy. Secondly, a man of prudence not of this world, but of spiritual prudence, to understand a penitent's spiritual state, necessities, remedies, &c. Thirdly, a man of virtue, zeal, great humility and charity; also of experience of the heart of man, or knowledge of the variety of its passions, infirmities, and movements; and likewise of personal experience in the interior paths of prayer, without which he can never be qualified to instruct or direct safely others in them; consequently he must be himself a man of prayer, and enlightened from God by it; having hence the gift of the discretion of spirits to distinguish that of God and that of the world, and qualified to know what methods of prayer are most proper for each disposition, &c. St. Teresa in her own life, c. 5, and 13. Alvarez du Par, the devout abbess Gertrude, More, &c, furnish us with examples of how great a hindrance unqualified directors are, even to fervent souls, in their spiritual progress. The great Avila used to say, that not one out of a thousand; St. Francis of Sales said, not one out of ten thousand is truly qualified for this task, which would be dreaded even by the angels, and which St. Gregory calls the art of arts. But it it is a great fault to be unreasonable in choosing a confessor, so as not to be content with such a choice as providence offers us; or with him it sends, if it allow us no choice, provided nothing essential be wanting. Nor is a choice to be made in such a manner as to include a tacit censure or contempt of other confessors. It is a lesson of the Holy Ghost; "subject not thy self to every man for sin." Eccl. iv. 31. St. Basil observes, Reg. brev. 229, 12, 465, that we are to follow the rule in confessing our sins, which we practise in seeking remedies for our corporal wounds, viz. to discover them only to the skilful. Origen had inculcated the same important advice, which proves that there was a choice of many confessors in the third age of the church. Look about very diligently, to whom you ought to confess your sins; try first the physician, to whom you ought to lay open the cause of your disorder, that he know how to condole; that, if he, who has shown himself a learned and tender physician, shall give you any counsel, you execute it. Origen, Hom, 2, in Ps. 37, p. 295. But this care is not to be anxious, nor to exceed the bounds of order and reason. God will supply any minor defects, and be himself our guide in that director he has provided for us, if we are not wanting to ourselves.

4. We are to look upon our confessor as our spiritual father, physician, judge, doctor, guide, and master, and as an angel deputed by God to conduct us to eternal life. We must lay open to him all our wounds and dangers; must ordinarily follow his resolutions in our scruples and doubts; must undertake nothing extraordinary, as in the choice of a state of life, in the practice of any extraordinary mortifications, &c., without his advice, if we hope to obtain God's benediction on our deliberations and endeavours. He will be best able to discover, if any thing of self-love, or self-will, or any human passion insinuate itself into our motives or desires. At least, by following direction we shall secure ourselves from all danger of illusion from them, and shall make to God the most agreeable sacrifice of our own judgment. It is a great happiness, if our confessor be one capable of directing us by his own experience in the interior paths and sentiments of a spirit of prayer and of other virtues. In this case, we may most profitably converse with him upon these subjects; but great care is to be taken, that such conversation never descend to the trifling circumstances of actions, or to a detail or history of them; which causes a loss of time, accustoms the heart to minutiæ or idle curiosity, and is apt to fill it with affections and attachments purely human. With persons of a different sex conversations must never be frequent or long on any account; nor with others, if there appear in them any danger of feeding a secret vanity or other passions.

But our deference to the judgment of our confessor is to have its due bounds. In scruples we are entirely to acquiesce in it. In matters, which are more intricate and of greater consequence we ought to see how far we can safely rely upon it. For though it be a safe rule to the more ignorant, and to those who have not opportunities of better advice, or reasons not to depend upon it, yet it will not be always such to others, nor indeed to any, if it regard essentials, or if it flatter the penitent's passions. St. Teresa says she should not have been excused before God in following such directors as would tell her, that was no sin which was so, because the point was sufficiently clear in itself. c. 5. "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the pit." Mat. xv. 14.

5. Though the choice of a confessor be free, yet it is an important advice not to change him for an other, unless upon sufficient reason and pure motives; also to adhere as much as possible to our ordinary confessor, to whom by this means the habitual state and circumstances of our souls will be better known, without which we lose all the advantage of direction; nor will confession be so strong a bridle or check to our passions. There will also be danger of making sacrilegious confessions, as the penitent's circumstances, temptations, and the danger of consent in them cannot be sufficiently known for the confessor to form a true judgment about them. This danger of sacrilege is much greater, if a penitent should seek new confessors on any extraordinary relapse; a base hypocrisy, and a practice severely condemned by divines.

6. A confession is to be reiterated, if it were invalid, which may happen many ways by any essential defect in the confessor, or in the penitent. In the confessor, if he really was no priest; or if a priest, but had not any jurisdiction to hear the penitent; either ordinary, by possessing some charge in the church, which makes him pastor of a certain flock, as that of rector of a parish; or delegate, granted him by an ordinary pastor, as the bishop. Although regulars, by grants of the Holy See, enjoy a privilege of jurisdiction, and exercise it over their own religious, yet they

cannot exercise it in regard to any seculars, unless authorised for this purpose by the bishop, as the Council of Trent has decreed. Pope Benedict XIV. anno 1745, declares expressly, that in the English mission they must receive faculties from the bishop. But in case of a coloured title and public mistake, that a priest had jurisdiction, though he should want it, the church supplies him with it in favour of the faithful. The confession is also invalid, if the priest did not pronounce the sacramental form of absolution. If by some distraction or deafness he did not hear or understand some mortal sin, that was confessed; though in this case the penitent will be excused before God, if he never be conscious of such a defect having happened; yet, if at any time hereafter he become apprized of it, he is bound to confess that sin again, as it had not been duly subjected to the keys of the church.

Confession is invalid through defects in the penitent; First, according to some, if he lay under any excommunication at the time of his absolution, and was not previously absolved from that censure. Secondly, if the penitent had not faith in the mysteries of one God, the author of our supernatural good, and reward; of three equal and co-eternal persons, and of the incarnation of the son of God; or if he were ignorant of any of these truths, even by an inculpable ignorance or forgetfulness of his catechism. Thirdly, if he were guilty of a considerable negligence in the examination of his conscience; of a want of sufficient contrition and true purpose of sinning no more and of satisfying for his sins; or of concealing any mortal sin or considerable aggravating circumstances in his confession, either directly, wilfully, or out of sloth or negligence. If the omission was inculpable, his confession was entire in the sight of God, and the absolution from all his sins, known and unknown, valid and full; but if this sin occur afterwards to his memory, he lies under an obligation of submitting it to the tribunal of the church, and this before he can receive the blessed eucharist; which requires greater purity of conscience than the other sacraments, for which being already in the state of grace is esteemed sufficient. In all these cases, the confessions made were null, and are to be entirely repeated though if the confession be made to the same confessor soon after, so that he remembers in general the other sins confessed, it is sufficient to repeat the confession of those, that were before mentioned, in general terms. A general confession of a person's whole life is necessary and of precept in any of the aforesaid cases, or in a prudent rational danger of them, or at least a confession from the time, in which there has been that danger of them, or such a one as may supply the essential defects, which are apprehended. And as an examination or contrition cannot but have been generally wanting in those, who have lived remiss and slothful in their preparation for this sacrament, or habitually careless of prayer or other spiritual duties, or in an habitual criminal ignorance of any parts of the catechism or christian duties, or of the duties of their calling, or in a habit of any mortal sin, into which they frequently and easily relapsed after their confessions, to all such a careful general confession is necessary to secure their salvation. It is true, that a subsequent good confession may restore a man to the state of grace, who is not conscious to himself of any former defects; but it cannot when he has reason to know them, because he is then bound to repair them.

7. When there is no precept or necessity of a general confession, it is sometimes very advisable; as to every man once in his life after he is grown up, to remedy any past neglects, to take a review of his whole life,

and to bewail all his crimes in the bitterness of his soul, and sometimes also the better to receive proper directions for the best method of repairing past losses, and serving God perfectly for the time to come. It is then proper, when a man first converts himself to fervour in the service of God. We read in St. Ouen's life of St. Eligius of Noyon, that, being come to man's age he made a confession of his whole life before a priest. It is often proper, when persons enter upon a state of life, to prepare them for it by putting them in the disposition of a new life, and of fervour. A confessor will also prudently allow it to those, who desire it in a spirit of compunction to bewail their sins at the sight of a mispent life, and to animate themselves with vigour now to begin a new one. But it is by no means to be permitted to those, who are scrupulous in their confessions, or who are for making them over and over again; for this would but increase their uneasiness, and bewilder their imagination. A general confession therefore is to be recommended only with prudence, and upon mature deliberation. It is to be very diligently made, as a concern, upon which a man's salvation mainly depends. A retreat for a few days is very proper for it, in which the mind, being free from other thoughts, may be more attentive to this, and which will furnish leisure for fervent prayer, pious meditation, a careful examination, tears of compunction, good resolutions, &c. We see this practice of general confessions recommended to us by the examples of St. Eligius, St. Tillo, king Pepin, St. Anselm, l. 3, ep. 66.

8. It is a most advantageous practice, after this careful general confession, to make every year a retreat and an annual confession, to discover by a stricter search any neglects, sprouting passions, or omissions of duties; to be careful about them, and repair any sloth in the ordinary frequenting of the sacraments by a diligent annual confession. St. Charles Borromeo employed every year two or three weeks in a retreat to prepare himself for such an annual confession, which he made with the greatest compunction for the slightest venial sins of frailty, after spending on the day of that confession eight hours on his kees to beg of God a true contrition and repentance. Cannot we allow for this examination, seven or eight, or at least three or four days? Every thing in nature falls to decay by degrees, unless continually renewed. Our best resolutions are insensibly impaired, and passions, once cut off, sprout up again, unless we watch over ourselves and renew in our souls the spirit of virtue. This indeed we endeavour to do in our evening examinations and in our ordinary confessions; but in these many things often escape us, which a narrower inspection into our hearts will discover to us, as daily experience shows. General confessions save many souls, which without them would have perished, whereof the life of St. Vincent Paul furnishes us with many examples, which may be read on this subject, 19th July. How many carry a secret sting in their consciences, which they feel, though they do not distinctly discern its cause? A general confession will show it, pluck it out, appease all the troubles of their burthened mind, and give them a peace, which in their present state they do not know.

We find the practice of general confessions recommended by the tradition of the church in all ages, as we see expressly from Socrates and Sozomen, supra, and by the examples of saints and holy men, as of St. Eligius of Noyon, St. Tillo, king Pepin, apud Hincm. ad Capit. Car. Mag. St. Anselm, l. 3, ep. 66, the statutes of the Carthusians, p. 2, c. 11.

DISCOURSE XXXVI.

ON THE PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION.

1. THE state of our souls greatly depends on the manner, in which we approach the holy sacraments of penance and of the blessed eucharist. Those, who frequent them with fervour and due dispositions, draw from them their spiritual life and strength. But some, and it is to be feared that their number is very great amongst christians, go to confession at their regular times, but so carelessly, as if it were merely out of custom or for fashion's sake. They have no sense of the difficulty and importance of the work, and seem to take penance for an easy thing, in which it is impossible for them to fail. They go almost without prayer or preparation, as if they had but to confess what crimes easily strike their minds, and to say in words, or in an act of contrition which they have read over, that they are sorry for having offended God, thinking that then all is well with them. "I have sinned, and what sorrow has befallen me?" Eccl. v. 5. Such Sacrilegious confessions are heavy additions to their crimes, and, serving only to blind sinners, are the seals of their reprobation. For this sacrament is a source, not of life, but of death, to those, who so impiously abuse it. It behoves me therefore to examine in what manner I approach it, and consider what the conditions and dispositions are, which I ought to bring to it.

The sacrament of penance has three parts, that regard the penitent. "contrition, confession, and satisfaction," an essential defect in any of which will make it null and sacrilegious. Three things are to be well considered in every penitent, viz. the conversion of the heart, the confession of the mouth and the chastisement of sin, as St. Gregory says, l. 6, in ll. Reg. x. 2. Contrition with prayer and the examination of conscience makes up the preparation before confession.

2. The first thing the penitent is to do in his preparation is to spend some time, more or less, as the difficulty of his conversion may seem to require in earnest and humble prayer, to beg of Almighty God the grace and light to discover, detest, and confess well all his sins, that he may obtain pardon and mercy. He is to remember, that his repentance must be the work of Almighty God, and is one of the greatest of his works, more difficult than was the creation of the whole world; and that without God he is not able so much as to conceive the least good thought, that can be conducive to it. He must likewise reflect, how the declared enemy of his salvation will not fail to employ all his arts and malice, to make him miscarry in this great undertaking to his eternal ruin, and how unworthy he himself is of all succour and grace from God, on account of his extreme baseness and ingratitude. Yet lifting up his eyes towards the divine mercies, which know no bounds, to which nothing is impossible, and which will be exalted in saving so undeserving and miserable a sinner; and humbling himself profoundly, as covered with his guilt and shame, before the infinite majesty of God, he must pour forth his soul in the most fervent prayer possible for so high and so undeserving a grace, persevering in it so long and with such earnestness, that he may hope God is graciously moved to stretch out the golden rod of his mercy upon him, enlightening his understanding to see, and touching his heart to detest and bewail sincerely all his offences. Has

this been always my case? How great iniquities have I? "Discover to me my sins and wickedness." Job xiii.

3. After prayer follows the second part of this preparation, which is the examination of our conscience, an exercise of great advantage in itself, yet seldom performed with sufficient care by tepid christians, though absolutely requisite for this sacrament. Few means are of equal advantage to this in helping us to subdue and root out our passions; for the first step towards obtaining a victory over them is to discover them and their sources, in order to call ourselves to an account for them, and take proper measures to extirpate them. By it, the soul learns the obstacles of her spiritual progress to remove them; finds out speedily what she has to correct in herself, before it has gained strength; and cleanses and watches always over her heart. This then is the capital enemy of all vices and imperfections, and the source of all our victories over our spiritual enemies. The very heathen philosophers inculcated it as the great remedy against all the disorders of souls, and prescribed it to be strictly performed every evening.

4. This examination, so necessary and advantageous in general, is an essential part of our preparation for this sacrament; for we must carefully examine our criminal heart, before we can accuse and condemn it. We can never make our confession entire, unless by a diligent scrutiny we have first discovered all our sins, as far as we are able. Christ therefore, by commanding us to confess them all, has commanded us first to examine ourselves; and an essential neglect in this duty must make the confession null and sacrilegious, as it exposes it to the danger of being criminally imperfect.

Too great a scrupulosity is to be avoided in it; this would but superfluously exhaust the vigour of the soul, and serve rather to perplex and disturb her. Christ requires only a moral diligence, such as a prudent person would use in an affair of importance. A metaphysical diligence, or the greatest possible to be used, would be very pernicious, would drown the soul in a labyrinth of inextricable scruples, and would serve to no good purpose. If, after a moral care, any thing has escaped the search, it is inculpably forgotten, and such an omission can no ways hurt the sacrament, as the precept of Christ is still fully complied with, and sins so forgotten are no less remitted by this repentance than those, which are remembered and confessed; for the will no less sincerely repents also of them, and would confess them, were they known to the soul, along with the rest.

DISCOURSE XXXVII.

ON THE CONDITIONS OF A GOOD CONFESSION.

1. By the precept of confession, a sinner is obliged distinctly to declare all mortal sins, or which he doubts may be such, committed after baptism, with their different species, number, and mortally aggravating circumstances. We distinguish the species of sins; either if they have objects that so differ, as pride and avarice; or if they are contrary to different

virtues, or to the same virtue in a contrary manner, as prodigality and covetousness, which both injure the same virtue of liberality; the first by excess, the other by defect; or thirdly, if they are forbidden by precepts made upon motives of distinct virtues. For, though a holiday fall on a Sunday, or a vigil on another fast; or though a thing be commanded by twenty laws or canons, all for the same end, a transgression will be but one sin, and a penitent satisfies by confessing he broke a fast of the church; but not if the precept have different virtues or ends in view, as if a fast enjoined in penance in the sacrament fall on a church fast.

Those sins are more grievous, which have an object, or impugn a virtue, that is more noble; as, in the first place, those which directly injure God in himself, as *e. g.* the crucifixion of Christ, then a positive hatred of God, next idolatry, after these an unworthy communion; then blasphemy, next perjury, and other sacrileges; then vices contrary to charity; after, those against faith or hope; then the most grievous injuries against our neighbour, as first murder, &c. though the highest in a lower species are more heinous than the lowest in a higher. Thus, though perjury be more grievous than murder, murder is a greater crime than a superfluous true oath. But the particular intenseness of the will, more perfect knowledge or deliberation, and the like circumstances, aggravate the malice of sins more or less in the same kind.

2. Sins are distinct in number, by the acts being morally distinct from one another. If a man be a whole night in committing a theft, or a whole day in going to a place and fighting a duel, he commits only one sin, unless he has revoked the intention of the sin, and resumed it again or interrupted the act, by a long application to something else. But if a sin has two species of malice, it is in morals to be reputed two sins also in number; as adultery, which is both an injustice and an incontinency: the theft of a holy thing is both an injustice and a sacrilege. Some call sins distinct also, which have adequate distinct objects; so that to detract with one affirmation against five persons is five sins. At least it contains the malice, that is equal; and the number of objects or persons injured must be expressed, as all agree. By these rules it appears that, if a man made, a day or two or more before, a resolution to commit a sin, he must confess, as nearly as he can guess, how often that intention occurred to his mind, and was renewed during that time, as the interruptions make the acts so many sins. So, in a criminal delay of restitution or payment of debts, the number of the acts, which are renewed, is to be confessed as making so many sins. If the exterior action of the sin be continued for days, the number of the interior acts, renewed during that time, is to be still expressed as nearly as may be, as *e. g.* in a continued pursuit of another out of hatred.

A person, who does not exactly remember the number, must express it thereabouts, rather the most he thinks, yet not at random really more than he thinks; for, this would be a lie.

In confessing a long habit, a penitent is not to aim at one total number, but to declare how often a month, week, or day for so long, taking one day with another he may *e. g.* have sworn rashly or falsely, also usually what kind of oaths. This method is more certain, and also expresses better and more clearly the state of the penitent, and the malice and vehemence of his habit. One, who has long in former confessions confessed his sins only in general terms, is bound afterwards to supply that defect by examining and expressing the number as nearly as he can.

He, who has stolen three crowns from three different persons, must express that circumstance, because it contained three distinct injuries. The exterior action must be confessed, because it is the complement of the sin, though the interior efficacious will may sometimes have contained the whole malice.

3. There are some circumstances, which add a new species to a sin, as *e. g.* if a thing stolen be sacred, or taken out of a sacred place; these must be confessed; otherwise, neither the species nor number of the sins would be declared. Moreover, the circumstances which do not change the species of a sin, still, if they grievously or mortally aggravate its malice, are to be expressed in a confession. For, they change very much the state of the penitent and the enormity of the sin, and often require different remedies and penances. The confessor cannot proceed, either as judge or physician, without the knowledge of them; they often make one sin equivalent in malice to two or three, as *e. g.* a theft of a larger sum of money. Hence the ancient canons order the penitent diligently to inquire into and consider all the circumstances. "Diligently inquiring into the circumstances both of the sinner and of the sin," says the third general council of Lateran, t. 11, Conc. p. 173. The ancient penitentials frequently repeat this precept. And the ancient canon law, can. 14 & 15, de pœn. dist. says; "Let him consider the quality of the crime, place, time, continuance, diversity of the person; all that difference is to be confessed." This St. Chrysostom means when he teaches; "Careful and pure confession of sins is to be made;" Hom. 30, in Gen. t. 4, p. 294. He hence exaggerates and trembles at the dreadful difficulties of the priestly charge, in which a man is bound in the tribunal of penance to judge, distinguish, and enjoin proportioned penances for every sin, according to the laws of the divine justice, under the dangers of our blindness, complaisance, favour, &c. De Sacerd. c. 4, t. 1, p. 374.

The circumstances of a sin are to be considered by those, which attend moral actions, and are comprised under these seven by Aristotle and other writers on moral philosophy. Who did the action? What was the action or object? In what place was it done? By what means? For what end? In what manner? and at what time?[a]

Under the circumstances of the person that sins, or *who;* it is to be considered in impurity, if said person was under a particular obligation of chastity, a virgin or one married; in scandal, if a priest, a parent, a superior or master of a family, a judge, prince, or any superior; in justice or charity, if a public person, a parent, one hired to him he injured, &c.

Under the circumstances of the object, or *what,* is to be considered whether the action be accomplished; in revenge, how great the desired injury was; in detraction how grievous the prejudice and injury; and whether against many, and how many; in impurity, whether the thought regarded a relation, a virgin, one married, &c. So as to lewd discourse, it is to be expressed whether it was before virgins, married persons, children, &c.

Under the circumstance of *place;* was it holy or public?

Under that of *by what means;* whether it was by abusing some sacred thing, by another's sin, &c.

Under that of the *end;* whether any other evil end was proposed in a sin; as if a man stole to get drunk. And though an evil end was not in-

[a] Quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando.

tended, whether any danger of it followed; as in detraction, or all sins with others, or scandal, who began first, &c. In theft, besides the injustice, the danger, to which a man exposes his life, is another sin, though sufficiently understood by the confessor in the first, so not necessary to be mentioned distinctly, no more than those of the state of the penitent if known to the priest.

Under that of *how*, or in what manner; was it with more than ordinary deliberation or intenseness of the will; with a formal express act of contempt of the law or superior, by habit, out of malice, envy, jealousy, or hatred; with treachery or craft, &c.

Under the circumstance of *time;* was it *e. g.* assisting at mass, on the day of communion, and at least in public, or debauchery of a long continuance, or was it on a Sunday or holiday?

The general circumstances of sins, such as general ingratitude to God, &c. need not be confessed, unless they are exaggerated by some particular circumstances. Presumption is to be confessed, if the hope of an easy pardon positively encouraged the sinner to offend; not otherwise. A resistance to, or contempt of divine inspirations is to be declared, if it was considerably greater than ordinary, or if they were openly and expressly excluded. He, who has exposed himself to an immediate occasion of sin, is to confess of what sin; if the sin actually followed, it suffices to confess it, without the occasion.

From this detail we see Gerson had reason to say; "I have found few, who have confessed perfectly and entirely," l. de Confess. n. 32. But the priest is not to be too troublesome in inquiring into circumstances, except where evident occasion offers itself; nor are penitents to be too nice or scrupulous in their detail. All superfluous circumstances or questions are to be most carefully shunned on both sides, but especially by the confessor.

4. Mere imperfections, which seem not venial sins or transgressions of any obligation, are not alone sufficient matter of absolution, though indeed they usually are accompanied with some venial sin of sloth, &c. and are piously heard in confession, in order to advise an amendment, providing a long verbose detail in them be avoided. For, it is saying nothing for a penitent to confess he has been passionate, ambitious, prone to this or that, or not loved God, &c.

The tepid, in confessing ordinary venial sins, ought to add something in particular of their life past, for which they may be more secure of a sufficient contrition.

In a doubt whether a sin was mortal or not, it is necessarily to be confessed. He who confessed a sin, as doubtful whether he committed it or not, is obliged afterwards to confess it as certain, if he remember it afterwards certainly; but not if his doubt be only something stronger, as it still remains uncertain.

5. A mortal sin inculpably omitted in confession is to be necessarily confessed, if it afterwards occur; but as formerly inculpably omitted. In a general confession, sins never before confessed in a valid confession, and again those committed since the last confession, are to be distinctly mentioned; as this circumstance very much alters them, as also the present state of the penitent.

A mortal sin is inculpably omitted in confession, first, by an invincible oblivion or ignorance of it. Secondly, if a penitent cannot confess some sin, without evident danger of some great prejudice or public infamy;

as if one in a ship or hospital cannot confess, without being overheard by many, and should be guilty of some capital or very infamous crime, which, through some wicked hearer, would probably be divulged; in which case he ought to confess his other sins, and conceal that till he could confess it without that imminent danger. In the article of death, such danger is rarely to be presumed. Thirdly, if a dying man has not time to confess all his sins; in such circumstances, let the priest be more solicitous to excite him to perfect contrition. Likewise, if in a fire, shipwreck, or danger of battle, there is not leisure to make an entire confession; it suffices in that case to confess as much as time permits, and with a sincere contrition to be absolved. But they, who escape that danger, are bound in their next confession to mention all mortal sins so omitted in their former confession.

It is a mortal sin of detraction to discover an accomplice in any sin, even in confession, if it can be avoided. A penitent must rather confess to a strange confessor, to whom such accomplice will not be known, if it can be conveniently done, or must rather say something little in confession; *e. g.* if one had reproached a father or only brother with adultery, let him only say that he treated him very contumeliously. But if he cannot go to another confessor, or confess his own crime otherwise, he is then to confess it, though an accomplice, *e. g.* a wife, parent, &c. be discovered under so inviolable a secret, and purely out of such necessity.

6. The conditions of a good confession may be reduced to these six; that it be entire, clear, short, bashful, with sorrow and humility.[a] It is not entire but sacrilegious, and a misrepresentation of the penitent's state, even if he knowingly exaggerates his crimes considerably too much; as *e. g.* if he confesses some crime which he knows he never committed, mentions a thing doubtful as certain, or an indeterminate number as determinate, though in such exaggerations usually ignorance, a good intention, and *bona fides* may excuse the past, and it is adviseable in doubts rather to lean to the highest as the safest, but still expressing the doubt. Secondly, it is more grievously defective in integrity, if it declare not all the mortal sins, with their number and necessary circumstances. Thirdly, if it studies to disguise or extenuate considerably any thing in this.

There are but few souls so lost to faith and to the fear of God, as to dare knowingly to insult religion in the very act of holy penance, and openly lie to the Holy Ghost in the most sacred tribunal of mercy, and in the very pretended supplication for pardon. But many fall into this impiety, without considering it, because they discover their consciences only by halves, and under the artifices and cloaks of pride. Instead of a sincere open accusation, they qualify their sins by softening studied expressions. They pass hastily over their most shameful wounds, for fear they should be perfectly understood by the priest, and rejoice if they perceive he was not so sufficiently watchful and attentive as to catch their half expressions, and probe their sores. If he be too vigilant, and begin to search their wounds, they fly to excuses and disguises, lest his hand should, by main force, find out their corruption. Ah! foolish hypocrites, ingenious and artful to deceive; does not your invisible judge read all your history in your hearts, and discover there what you refuse to lay open to him to efface? Whilst you secretly triumph in your disguises, he insults your ridiculous shame

[a] Integra, clara, brevis, verecunda, dolens, humilisque.

and artifice, as the prophet did the impious wife of Jeroboam, who hoped to impose upon him, and pass unknown to him in a borrowed dress. *Quare aliam te esse simulas?* 3 Reg. xiv. 6. Base soul, show yourself what you are; unmask your miserable heart; it is all open to me; my invisible eye penetrates its abominations. Foolish that you are to imagine, that slender disguises can hide your malice; more foolish yet to seek to hide your miseries from your physician, who would remove and heal them. *Quare aliam te esse simulas?*

7. Many confessions again are not entire, because the penitents conceal several circumstances, which would discover a greater degree of consent and malice; such as measures taken for the crimes, resolutions of it long formed and often renewed; dangerous occasions frequented; circumstances accompanying the act or desires, which would clearly show the fury of our passion, or the fullness of the consent, which they study to extenuate and palliate, &c. Some by an affected timorousness and scrupulosity in certain points, endeavour to make the state of their soul so obscure, that their wilful passions may pass only for groundless fears, or doubtful alarms of one who fears all things.

If many seek to cover their criminal actions and desires by such artifices, many more study to suppress great part of the interior malice of their hearts. They seldom disclose the whole criminal motives and principles of their actions. It is from the disposition of the heart that vices are to be taxed and weighed, as their malice consists and is to be sought in it. Yet how seldom is this heart laid open in the tribunal? How many disguise it to themselves in their examinations? How many more hide it from their judge in the sacrament? They expose their actions, but never their motives and their conscience. Men *e. g.* confess they are censorious, passionate, self-opinionated, or obstinate in their will, froward or disobedient in smaller things; but never mention that deep wound of pride in their hearts, whence those other sins proceed. They accuse themselves of frequent small detractions, disgusts, antipathies, or injurious treatment and contempt of others; but never add that a secret envy or jealousy of other's reputation, talents, merit or fortune, is the spring, whence they arise and are entertained. They confess a certain vague human respect, certain chagrins under great provocations, in which they pretend they live, or the like; but forget the main point, which is perhaps, a secret vanity, that makes them insupportable to every body, and able to bear nothing themselves but what flatters their self-love, and sooths their favourite passion. In like manner criminal fondnesses, covetousness, ambition, and other grievous interior sins are even fostered and cherished in the heart; only some outward branches are sentenced to be lopped off. The root, hidden under the earth, is concealed and even industriously nourished. But God is the interpreter of hearts. With him no art or disguise will be admitted. *Apud cordis interpretem ars non admittitur ad salutem.* St. Aug.

8. Confession is to be also clear, *i. e.* naked, clear without any craft of words, seeking to lay open the full malice of the sins in its blackest colours. Some confess so bashfully, and by halves, as to impose only a phantom and false idol of themselves, instead of their own hearts. They express their crimes in such vague general terms, that the confessor can form no distinct idea of their state; and, when he inquires into it, they answer in such an abscure manner, intermingling excuses, doubts, fears, all together, so as only to make the mist thicker, and leave him more in the dark. O

cursed shame, thus to destroy the very end of holy confession, and turn it into an artful pleading only to impose! The penitent is to remember, that he here acts the part of an accuser of his own criminal conscience; consequently that he is to discover and lay open fully its guilt. If he prevaricates, instead of pardon he does but play the hypocrite, and mock God. A true penitent soul does not excuse her failings, but enters into a fair detail of them in her confession; making it perfectly, that thus God may receive her repentance, and not become himself her accuser. "If thou accusest thyself, God excuseth thee: if thou excusest thyself, God accuseth thee," says St. Augustin.

9. A third condition is, that confession be short. Nothing superfluous, nothing but what is necessary to give a knowledge of the penitent's state and sins, is to be intermixed; no word of his health, domestic affairs, friends, or what his name or country is; in a word, nothing is to be asked or said foreign to the naked simple manifestation of his conscience and guilt. The very accusation of sins ought to be concise and short, without a relation of any minute impertinent circumstance. Some persons cannot accuse themselves, *e. g.* of anger or a lie, without giving a detail of the provocation they received, &c. Others will make all their domestic affairs enter into their confessions. This is against the nature and simplicity of confession, and contrary to the reverence due to the sacrament, and to the dispositions of a true penitent, who is too full of sense of his guilt, and of feeling sentiments of compunction, to entertain himself with what is foreign to it. The penitent is to remember he is not to make his confession an entertaining history of his life and adventures; that such prolix and impertinent narrations can only proceed from a talkativeness, curiosity, self-love, and secret pride, which finds a pleasure in dwelling on itself and its concerns, or in such circumstances as may move the confessor to regard, tenderness and compassion; all which is quite contrary to a spirit of compunction, and to the nature of an accusation, as it tends only to draw their own and their confessor's attention from their guilt, and to lose sight of it in such a medley of idle circumstances. The very accusation of sins is to be full indeed, but succinct, comprehended in the fewest words, ready, and with as quick despatch as gravity, seriousness, and a full confession will allow, as St. Thomas observes, Sup. q. q. a. 4.

Fourthly, The confession must be bashful; the heart inwardly blushing at the baseness of its crimes, and condemning itself to all the confusion, which it deserves for them; the words also expressing its infamy to the utmost, boldly desiring to draw upon the guilty soul all the reproaches and confusion, which are justly due, and by which she labours to prevent eternal disgrace. An impudent narration of sins, without any shame or confusion, has neither the spirit nor the air of a confession. In temptations against the sixth commandment every thing must be carefully expressed in the most modest terms, and so short and cursorily that no images may be painted on the mind.

Fifthly, The confession must be weeping, or with sorrow in the heart; and the marks of it in the words and behaviour of the penitent. The act of contrition some think ought necessarily to be made before the confession; if it be not, it may be followed by an accusation, in general, of all before confessed prior to absolution.

Sixthly, It must be humble, both by humility of the heart, and in the exterior behaviour and great modesty of dress, according to custom on

the knees, uncovered, and having put off spurs and swords. Knights of military religious Orders, of Malta, Alcantara, the Teutonic, &c. approach the sacraments with their swords on, by a privilege of custom, as in them that is a mark of their honour and respect in an action.

10. True humility of heart is a condition often wanting in confession. Many intermix the artifices and palliations of pride with the accusation of their crimes, which they only discover by halves, and under disguises. Many make to enter into their confessions titles of worldly honour, as great acquaintance or friends, birth, rank, advantages of fortune, generosity, talents of body or mind, or whatever else may seem glorious in the world; or the number of their prayers, their alms, mortifications, patience, or an enumeration of sins which they are exempt from; and they find more pride in the exhibition of some such foolish vanity than they feel confusion from their crimes, which are their own. Many allege excuses, thinking by them to extenuate their offences, such as the violence of their temptation, their long resistance, their grief and remorse, &c. like Adam, who, instead of an humble confession of his guilt, threw the blame on Eve; and she, seeking a like excuse, on the devil. This is to carry pride caressed and openly engraved on their faces, and to present themselves marked with it before the very throne of mercy. Such persons prove themselves still possessed with the spirit of the devil. But the language of sincere grief and repentance is a language which is humble, natural, and sincere. A soul, touched with a true regret, knows not how to dissemble or excuse her faults, but impeaches herself, aggravating each as a faithful accuser. To use in confession such mitigations and arts is really for a soul to declare, that she comes not in the spirit, nor even in the habit of a true penitent.

11. Sacramental confession cannot be made, nor absolutely received by a letter, or by a message at a distance. "Christ was pleased that the penitents should be presented as criminals before this tribunal in person;" says the council of Trent, Sess. xiv. cap. 2. And an ancient writer quoted in the Canon law says: Cap. quem pœnit. dist. 1. "Sins are to be confessed by corporal presence, not by a messenger nor by writing. You, who have sinned by yourselves, must blush and bear your confusion in your own person. For so Christ has commanded." One indeed who is dumb, may, and is obliged, to confess by signs or by writing, but himself must be present. The tradition of the chruch holds this corporal presence and oral confession, when possible, to be essential to this sacrament. It was sometimes a practise of devotion, though never of obligation, recommended by St. Thomas, in 4 dist. 17, q. 3, a. 3, questione 2, p. 109, & a. 4, questione 3, ad 3, that dying persons, when no priest could be had, made a confession to some lay-man; by which they exercised an act of humiliation and penance, and testified their desire of subjecting themselves to the tribunal of the church. Thus the truly great captain and devout christian knight Bayard, being mortally wounded, made his confession to his footman. But, for fear of abuses and inconveniencies, this devotion is entirely disused. Nor could it ever be a sacrament or of precept, as the priests are constituted by Christ the sole ministers and dispensers of this sacrament. For to them alone Christ committed this authority. "This right was granted only to the priests," says St. Ambrose, l. 1, de pœnit. c. 2, t. 4.

For one, whose language is not understood by the priest, it is allowed (nay commanded, in danger of death, to persons conscious to themselves of any mortal sin) to confess to the priest by an interpreter, who is bound to

the same seal of secrecy with the priest. As to a public confession of secret sins, it may be sometimes practised out of voluntary devotion, as a free act of humiliation, where there is no danger of it giving any scandal, as before a pious company of religious; otherwise, it would be sinful. But Christ has in no case commanded it. Whence, St. Leo being informed, that some had enjoined such a confession to certain penitents, condemned their presumption against the apostolical rule, and their illegal and unjust usurpation, as he calls it, "seeing it is sufficient to discover the guilt of consciences to the priests alone by secret confession." Ep. 136.

12. We are to distinguish a timerous and a scrupulous conscience. The first is the property of true virtue and divine charity, which, with Job and all the saints, fears all its works, punishes by severe penances in itself, flies and dreads even the shadow of the least sin, and in all real doubts, both in confession and in all its conduct, leans to the safe side, and seeks the will of God by good advice, full of humility and distrust in its own lights. The world, to excuse its own libertinism and sloth in virtue, often fastens on this characteristic of all the saints the odious name of scrupulosity, which differs infinitely from it, and which is not a daughter of holy charity, that fills the soul with light and spiritual understanding; but of darkness and confusion, and is, in a great degree, a most dangerous and pernicious evil. For, it is a very great impediment to the love of God and progress in virtue, drowning a soul in fruitless fears, and wasting her by superfluous anxieties. It makes life itself a bitterness, is an insupportable torture of the mind, more grievous than can be believed by those who have not experienced it, a great loss of time and virtue, a wasting of the soul, a certain cause of tepidity, and often in the end, if not checked, the ruin both of soul and body; as it tends to hurt the head and bodily health, leads to madness, of which it contains always some portion, and sometimes to sins, through the very tediousness of life, or even to despair. It therefore behoves us to learn what this evil is, which so few have a right idea of; also what are its causes, and what its remedies.

13. A scruple is a foolish groundless imagination and fear of a danger of sin, where there is no such danger. Whence it differs widely from timerousness of conscience, which fears the least danger; but yet with prudence, and where there is reason to fear. A scruple is not a formed judgment, but a wavering of the soul, not knowing what to say or do, even in things the most evident. Scrupulosity is a habit of such scruples. The penitent himself can never be capable of judging whether he is scrupulous or not; for no man can be judge in his own case, above all in scruples when his mind is so clouded and disturbed, that he can judge of nothing justly. But the marks of this state are so evident, that a prudent director cannot fail to discover it; seldom indeed from one confession; but after four or five, or some experience of such a soul, he will certainly see her malady, without any danger of mistaking it, viz. by these signs: if the penitent doubts of things, which he cannot but know certainly, or remember he has already confessed or asked advice about; or if he doubt of almost every action or obligation, or of any of them, evidently irrationally, and merely through the disturbance of his imagination; or if he often change his opinion about the same thing at the least shadow; or feeds himself with extravagant reflections and whims upon the most trifling circumstances of his actions; or if he be never satisfied in his fears, entertains them obstinately not acquiescing in any one's solution, but harbouring and indulging them.

Some are scrupulous in all lines; others only in certain lines, as in their examinations of conscience, in anxiety whether their sins are pardoned, in repeating their prayers, or with regard to certain interior temptations or whims of their imagination. These are often very base by certain fits, or in some other respects, in which they cherish some favorite passions, and allow themselves the most dangerous liberties without scruple. The case of these is very dangerous, especially if they affect to pass for scrupulous, and desire to flatter themselves that they really are so also in those indulged passions. These resemble the Pharisees, who out of a motive of conscience would not enter the house of Pilate, whilst at the same time they were prosecuting through envy a known innocent man, and the true Messiah; and who, fondly wallowing in pride and hypocrisy, yet were scrupulous in prayer and tithes, and works of supererogation.

14. There are three different sorts of scrupulosity, arising from as many very different causes. The first comes from God, and is of souls, which are beginning to serve him. The second is from ourselves or a constitution of body too much indulged. The third is from the devil.

As to that scrupulosity, which comes from God, it is chiefly the trial of souls newly beginning to serve him with fervour. It is said to be from God, because he gives not that light, which would dispel them, and scatter the clouds which darken the imagination. He thus punishes their past hardness of heart and insensibility, by permitting them to fall into excessive fears. "I will strike their heart with fright; they shall tremble at the noise of a leaf that flies." Lev. xxvi. 36. It is most advantageous and necessary to such souls, being a severe, interior trial, serving to purify and cleanse the soul from all earthly affections, which are not to be destroyed and rooted out without some bitter inward remedies. Thus it disposes a heart to eminent virtue. St. Ignatius of Loyola, F. Surin, and most other faithful souls, passed through this purgation, many during several years together. The more severe this trial is, usually the greater mark it is of a higher perfection, to which God designs to raise a soul more perfectly dead to all, that is any way inordinate in her; for the love of creatures cannot be perfectly expelled out of a heart but by violence, and with much bitterness and harshness. This scrupulosity is indeed a state of imperfection, and of an excess of fear; but it proceeds from a good principle and a motive of charity, viz. the dread of offending God. If a soul be obstinate, and refuse to obey and follow direction, she will be lost by this trial. But if she be obedient to her director, acquiesce calmly in his advice, and despise her vain fears in blind obedience, denying her own will and judgment, and making to God a sacrifice even of her fears, which she conceives for his sake, she will be at last happily delivered, and translated on a sudden into a land of light, joy, and peace.

15. That scrupulosity, which arises from a natural melancholy thoughtful constitution and a violent imagination, obstinately adhering to the impression of fear from all groundless occasions, is usually vehement, and hard to be conquered. The physician may sometimes be of service.[a] Deep thought or pensiveness, sudden fear, solitude, and the like, are very pernicious to this disposition of mind, and are to be shunned. It is designed by God for the good of souls, by being their trial and cross; but it must be carefully resisted and fought against by the means mentioned

[a] Bathing in the sea, or violent purgatives, &c.

below, without ever yielding to a disposition to thoughtfulness and melancholy, and to reasoning.

Lastly, There is a scrupulosity proceeding from the devil, who indeed labours to turn all scrupulosity to his ends, to draw souls from making any progress in virtue, and by abjectness, melancholy, and tediousness, to lead them into sin and the very gulf of despair.

16. It is inconceivable what interior grievous pains, struggles, and anguish the scrupulous suffer. One would think such souls would be easily cured, even for their own peace and tranquillity; but so it is, that there is not any moral evil in the soul more stubborn, or more difficult to be overcome. Nothing requires greater firmness and resolution in the director, or greater violence in the penitent.

Prayer and a blind obedience are the two great means to remove scrupulosity. As the first step towards a cure in any disorder is for a person to know his distemper, the scrupulous soul must, in the first place, be convinced that she is really scrupulous, and be persuaded how grievous and dangerous an evil this is. It causes her to spend all her strength in fighting against chimeras and imaginary enemies, by which her passions, especially dejection and a secret pride, are permitted to fortify themselves. Virtue, particularly hope, fervour, and divine love, is choaked up like the good seed amidst thorns and briars. Obedience, the soul of humility and true virtue, is openly trampled upon, and the designs of God upon the soul quite subverted. She is incapable of a spirit of prayer, or of filling her heart with the sentiments of any true virtue, labouring under the agitations and disturbance of her fears. In short, out of a fear of being lost for eternity, she adopts the method to be lost, and runs wilfully through the greatest tortures into both corporal and spiritual ruin, whilst it is in her power at once to free herself from these evils, and purchase to herself assurance, peace, and joy. But it is not from herself that she can surely learn her disorder. Her director alone can discover it, and must make her sensible of it; nor is there any spiritual disorder, that requires a firmer and more skilful assistant. When persons, on their side, would fain pass for scrupulous, this is often only a refined pride and an artifice of self-love to seek to be more indulged in some favourite passions, or to be soothed in their vanity.

17. When the soul sees her malady, she must by fervent and perseverant prayer implore the divine assistance, with great humility and confidence, being sure thus to obtain it, if she accompanies it with a distrust in her own judgment, and blind obedience to her directors in the points of her scrupulosity.

She must be persuaded, that her salvation depends on the submission of her will and judgment to that of God's ministers, who are appointed to govern her, and hold his place in regard to her. Following this rule, she cannot go astray: without it, all the other means she can practise will be fruitless. This is the order established by God for the direction of our souls; and "he who resists the power, resists the ordinance of God." Rom. xiii. 2. St. Teresa testifies of herself, c. 31, 33, that, though she was most assured of the inspiration and voice of God in any thing, she would never undertake or determine any thing in it, but according to the advice of her director. And Pope Gregory XV. in the bull of her canonization, *Omnipotens sermo Dei*, *A. D.* 1622, says of her: "She not only submitted all her exterior actions to the judgment of her superiors, with the greatest humility of spirit, but also all her thoughts. Having

written a book on the Canticles, filled with great piety, she threw it into the fire, to obey her confessor." What wonder, indeed, that the discreetest and most divinely enlightened amongst the saints should make obedience their rule in the conduct of their consciences, since God himself gave the same rule to St. Paul, and to all those saints, whom he miraculously called to himself.

This is much more particularly the rule for scrupulous persons. For they are not capable of judging for themselves, under the prejudice of their fears, which make them mistake every shadow for a ghost, and raise mere phantoms in their imagination. It is also to blind obedience that God has annexed the graces of their cure. Nor must they seek for conviction from their confessor, or reason the case with him. This only serves to indulge and increase their evil, and under their disturbance of mind they are incapable of right reason upon that subject; nor would that be obedience, or have its merit. They must be assured that, if they will not resolve to obey, without satisfaction given them, and with their eyes shut, their case is desperate. Not even an angel from heaven can ever cure them, till they have learned to deny simply their own judgment, and govern themselves purely by obedience. They must not endeavour to overcome their scruples by reasoning, but set out courageously against them, and despise them, according to the rules given them by their confessor. Innumerable souls, almost lost with scruples, no sooner submitted themselves calmly to the judgment of their directors, than they found themselves instantly restored to peace. Gerson, præp. miss. cons. 3, t. p. 323, and from him St. Antoninus, par. 1, tit. 3, c. 10, t. 1. p. 69, relates, that "a certain disciple of St. Bernard was so disturbed with scruples, that he durst by no means approach the altar to celebrate the divine mysteries. St. Bernard understanding this said to him; Go, brother, and celebrate on my word; I take it upon me. The disciple obeyed, and never felt any further annoyance from his scruples. But you will say, on these great authors, I would obey, if I had a St. Bernard for my director. You are grievously mistaken, whoever you are; for you have not committed yourself and your salvation to a man, because he is prudent or learned; but because he is your confessor. Obey him therefore, not as a man, but as God commanding you through him, as long as he commands not against God. Often your obedience will be so much the more agreeable to God, and profitable to yourself, as he, whom you obey for God, is more unworthy." Gerson adds another example, (Consid. 3,) of one perpetually disturbed with scruples about the recital of the divine office, till his director enjoined him for his penance never to repeat any part, which he had once said.

What can the penitent fear in obeying? He follows by it the sure known will of God no less than if dictated to him by an angel sent on purpose from heaven to instruct him. "He who hears you, hears me." Luke x. 16. If he should chance to omit any sin in confession, or his consent should have been wilful in any evil thought, his repentance and confession will still be entire, as he omits it inculpably. Nay, his confessor is still to oblige him to follow his direction, even should there be danger of such an omission, when this is necessary to deliver him from some scrupulosity; for, a material integrity of confession does not oblige under so great a spiritual and corporal prejudice or danger. The scrupulous person often is not obliged to an equal diligence in his examination, or to many other rules to be observed by others, but impracticable to him for fear of greater mischief.

18. As to scrupulosity in confessions; after a loose or tepid life, or after a general confession, it is natural that for some time, sins of the life past, not confessed, should occur in the ordinary confessions to be made up. If henceforth a soul should doubt of things, which must have been confessed before, or the like, this rule must be given her, that she must mention nothing of her life past, without being certain it was never confessed before, and also certain it was wilfully consented to and a mortal sin. What is really doubtful in itself, would seem certain to one that is scrupulous. If something really doubtful should have been passed over, it is much better it should be so than that the scrupulosity should be incurably indulged. If it be necessary that the confessor limit the time and method of the examination of conscience, or what is not to be mentioned in confession, these rules are strictly to be observed by the penitent soul; otherwise she would sin by wilful scrupulosity, by which she hurts her corporal and spiritual health, checks her spiritual progress, defends proudly her own judgment, and depreciates the goodness of God, whom she represents to herself rather as a tyrant, laying snares for her, and delighted in her loss, than as a kind and tender father. Iterating scrupulously examens or confessions only increases and exaggerates exceedingly the evil, as it is but scratching a sore. This is especially true of those, who think they are never rightly understood. If a penitent be scrupulously anxious about the pardon of his sins, let him read the letter of St. Gregory the great to Gregoria, maid of honour to the Empress, l. 6, ep. 22. "I know that you love God, and I confide in his mercy that he has said to you; 'Much is remitted to her, because she has loved much.' Luke vii. You add, you will always trouble me till I shall write, that it has been revealed to me that your sins are forgiven you. You ask here what is both difficult and unprofitable; difficult, for I am unworthy of any revelation; unprofitable, because God would not have you secure for your sins, till you shall be able to weep no longer for them. To the end of your life, you must always live fearful, and wash yourself with daily tears."

In scruples about consent to interior thoughts of blasphemy, rash judgment, &c. many things pass in the imagination, which the will all the while abhors. Let the person calmly repress them; violence would imprint them more strongly. Gerson relates, (de rem. blasph.) that a monk had suffered such temptations during twenty years, not daring to discover them. At length he disclosed them to a spiritual father in writing, being ashamed to do so in words. The director assured him they had never passed his will, and laying his hand upon the penitent's head, said; "Son, I take all the sin and its guilt upon my own head." The monk acquiesced, and never felt any further molestation.

All scrupulous persons must carefully fly idleness, affected solitude, and the sighing company of such as are infected with the same disorder. All this contributes very much to create perplexities, to entertain the mind in doubts, and to confirm the will in its obstinacy. Serious occupation removes the occasions of those phantoms and objects, which disturb its peace. They must meditate on the mercy, goodness, and perfections of God, and more frequently entertain themselves with sentiments of confidence and love, than with motives of servile fear.

DISCOURSE XXXVIII.

ON SACRAMENTAL ABSOLUTION AND SATISFACTION.

1. THE Council of Trent defines, according to the doctrine of scripture, and the constant tradition of the church, that the sacramental absolution is not a bare ministry, or a declaration that the sins of the penitent are forgiven, but in the form of a judicial act, by which sentence is pronounced by the priest, as judge. Sess. XIV. cap. 6. "He sits judge on the earth. The Lord follows his servant;" says St. Chrysostom, hom. 5, de verbis Isa. t. 6, p. 132. For he truly looseus and remits the sins in the name of God, and as his delegate and viceregent. The absolution therefore is pronounced by God's minister on earth, after cognizance of the penitent's sins, and his sincere dispositions of repentance; but, at the same time, ratified by Christ the invisible high-priest in heaven. This sentence therefore blots out the guilt of the sin, and effaces the hand writing that stood against the sinner, restores the lost soul to the favour and friendship of almighty God, clothes her again with the rich and sacred robe of sanctifying grace, revives past merits deadened by sin, and in a moment produces that great and wonderful change in the soul, by which she is transferred from the frightful state of sin to that of grace; and, from a slave of the devil, made the child of God, the glorious companion of the saints, and enrolled a denizen of heaven, and co-heir with Christ. The angels wait in silence, in expectation of this happy word; and at it the whole court of heaven sounds forth the praises of the great God of mercies, each citizen congratulating one another on the joy of the recovery of this new citizen. The penitent must receive this gracious sentence in the most profound sentiments of humility, compunction, and ardent love.

2. It is a notorious slander of certain modern sectaries, that the Catholic Church teaches, that absolution remits sin, without repentance, or at a cheap rate; whereas the fear of her tribunal of penance was a great motive to impenitent libertines, to set up the standard of heresy, and deny her jurisdiction. Her discipline of penance, though mixed with the gospel sweetness, is more severe than theirs, and seems a yoke no way supportable; such enemies are they of penance, and so unwilling to undergo the test of it. Her sacrament of reconciliation is made up of all the different acts of true penance, and is a course of that virtue. Her doctrine in this article is most holy and pure; for, though all her children, who have forfeited their allegiance to God by sin, are bound to submit themselves to her tribunal by the command of Christ, yet it is perpetually inculcated to them, that instead of pardon they incur the guilt of sacrilege, if they approach it without the dispositions of true penance; and all possible means are used to excite her children to them. She moreover repeats in her canons, and by the voice of her ministers, that the benefit of absolution is to be denied to all, who do not give evident marks of a sincere conversion of heart. On which may be read the rules of St. Charles Borroméo, Cardinal Grimaldi, Cardinal Denholf, and the late instructions of all the present greatest luminaries of the French prelates[a].

[a] NOTE.—Published when this work was first printed, about 60 years ago.—ED.

"Then the absolution of the president is true, when it follows the will of the judge," as St. Gregory the great says, Hom. 26, in evang. t. 3, p. 1555. And again: "The causes are to be weighed, and then the power of binding and loosing is to be exercised. It is to be seen what sin went before, and what penance followed, that the sentence of the pastor may absolve those, whom God visits by the grace of compunction. ib.

3. The priest is bound to deny absolution, even in the article of death, to all who are manifestly indisposed, such as those, who refuse to be reconciled with an enemy, or to forgive an injury; to make restitution for any injustice, or to pay lawful debts; to satisfy for contumelies or injuries committed; to renounce any sin, as prodigality, &c. or any immediate occasion of sin, as to destroy bad books they are accustomed to read; women to leave off going with breasts naked, faces painted, &c. parents to instruct their children and domestics in their catechism, or to take in other matters the necessary care of them; to all who are ignorant in the catechism, of the mysteries of the Trinity or incarnation, though they may promise sincerely to learn them; as to other parts of the catechism, or other things mentioned, upon a sincere promise of learning them, the penitent may be absolved the first time; but if he has once broke his word, his sincerity is to be suspected, and absolution deferred till he has actually fulfilled his promises. And in cases of restitution or satisfaction, in things of great moment, if it can be done, it is usually advisable to defer absolution till it be actually made.

Absolution is to be deferred to those, who are doubtfully disposed, till the doubt shall be removed, and the penitent's dispositions ascertained. For the priest is obliged to be a faithful dispenser, and not give holy things to be, perhaps, sacrilegiously profaned; not to acquit those, who may be worthy of death, and whom Christ does not absolve; nor lead the blind to hell; nor to judge without sufficient knowledge of the cause. Hence the late learned Bishop of Arras, Instr. p. 505, says: "The confessor must have a moral certainty of the disposition of the penitent, by solid remarkable signs. And in this all divines agree." Suarez, &c. Such a moral certainty is to be understood as the matter is capable of, viz. a firm and prudent judgment, grounded on solid marks of sincere repentance. For this reason absolution is to be deferred to habitual sinners, even the first time, unless they give extraordinary marks of a true conversion; because in such persons a sincere repentance usually is the work of some time, not of an hour; and as an evil habit is an immediate inward occasion, some time is necessary to diminish its violence by the employment of proper means. Also, some delay is often a great means to give such sinners a sense of their state, and make them more serious to amend it. It is likewise to be deferred to those, who have often relapsed into mortal sin after penance; in which case it is to be considered how soon, how easily, &c. they returned to the vomit. For this is a sign that a true contrition was before wanting. Besides, a delay is a wholesome means to cure them. Sinners make lighter of their offences, when the remedy appears easy to them, as the fathers urge. In cases of urgent necessity, as in the article of death, there is no room for delays; accordingly, the sacrament must be then administered, even to the doubtfully disposed, lest they perish for want of it.

4. The devil has, from the beginning of the church, employed all his engines to destroy the virtue of holy penance, by labouring to enervate its

discipline, and thus, by seducing sinners into a false idea and practise of repentance, deprive them of the only plank, the only means of salvation, that remains for them after their misfortune. The zealous pastors of the church have, from the first ages, strenuously opposed this danger; ever complaining, that many deceived by it, both confessors and penitents, run blindfold together into the eternal precipice. In the time of Charlemagne several penitentials were abolished, which began openly to creep abroad, dispensing men as it were, from the gospel-law of penance, and tending, by a false peace, to lead them into final impenitence. But could there be ever a greater reason for this complaint, than in this unhappy age, in which many pretend to be penitents, still retaining the same sinful affections and disorders concealed lurking in their hearts? Is not this a calamity, which well deserves the fears of all, who have any love for Jesus Christ, or any respect for his holy mysteries? O! ministers of Christ, what shall you answer to the Saviour of the world, when he, coming to judge the world at the last day, will require at your hands those souls redeemed by his blood, which your neglect or interested complaisance shall have plunged into a miserable damnation? You are not indeed to act with a spirit of harshness, but with mildness towards sinners, being the disciples, and even, in some degree, the fellow-labourers of him, who made it his delight to converse with, and, chiefly by his divine meekness, gain and save sinners. Wo to any, who should by austerity alienate them from their salvation, instead of bearing their burthens with them to raise them out of their miseries. "But wo also to those who go saying, Peace, peace, and there was no peace." Jer. vi. 14. "Wo to them who sow cushions under every elbow, and pillows under the head of every age to catch souls, and when they caught the souls of my people, said they gave life to them. And they violated me to my people for a handful of barley and a morsel of bread, to kill souls which do not die, and to give life to souls which do not live, lying to my people which believes lies." Ezech. xiii. 18, 19. "The prophets prophesied a lie, and the priests clapped with their hands; and my people loved such things. What therefore will be in his end?" Jer. v. 31. How grievously will the God and loving Redeemer of souls reproach in the fury of his anger such prevaricating ministers? I have raised you, will he say, to a function greater and more divine than the ministry of my angels; I have associated you to my priesthood, and to the authority I acquired to myself by my death and resurrection, giving you power and an order to remit sin to true penitents, to consecrate my body, and to preach my Gospel; but you have adulterated my word, and profaned my sacraments. I made you the dispensers of my graces, and the distributors of my most precious gifts to men, and at the same time gave you severely in charge to be prudent and faithful in your dispensation, not to give holy things to dogs, nor to throw my jewels before swine. How then have you by ignorance, neglect, false mildness, softness, or criminal compliance, filled my church with abominations and sacrileges? You ought to have defended the honour due to my mysteries and altars to the loss of your blood, by the severest deaths; how then have you had so little zeal for them, as to have yourselves polluted them by admitting to my table those, who wanted the nuptial garment, and betraying me into the hands of hypocrites and my known enemies?

The second general Council of Lateran, under Pope Innocent II. Can. 22, A. D. 1139, makes this just complaint, and gives all pastors this serious

warning; "Because, amongst other things, there is one which above the rest disturbs the church, viz. false penitence; we admonish our fellow-brethren and priests, that they suffer not the souls of the laity to be deceived by false penances, and dragged into hell."

5. But penitents, by importunities and impatience, extort from them absolutions. How little do they consider that they are only delegates, and their absolution only a new enormous crime, if it be not conformable to the sentence of him, in whose name they pronounce it? St. Cyprian compares such persons to sick patients seized with a phrenzy, who refuse all remedies and applications which might cure them, and are even angry at their physicians and friends for their care of them; Tr. de laps. p. 93, ep. 17, p. 196, ed. pam. He adds: "It is out of tenderness for them that he would have their reconciliation delayed and tried, lest, instead of pardon, God be more offended; ep. 17, ib. and that such pastors are really the butchers of their sheep;" ep. 15, p. 195. When the persecution had ceased, and afforded the faithful some respite, he calls the ease with which certain sinners would extort an absolution, a second pit to destroy souls. "A new kind of destruction is arisen; and, as if the storm of the persecution had not raged with sufficient desolation of souls, a treacherous evil and a mild death has succeeded under the title of mercy to complete the misfortune. Against the severity of the gospel, against the law of the Lord and God, by the rashness of some, the communion is restored to the unworthy; a peace false and null, dangerous to those who give it, and which will not profit them who receive it." Tr. de laps. p. 91. The clergy of the Church of Rome, ep. 30, Pam. 30, Fell. to St. Cyprian, confirm his maxims, and say: "Where can the remedy of pardon take place, if the physician himself stopping imperfect penance flatters and yields to the dangers? If he only covers the wound, this is not to cure; but, to speak the truth, to kill." And St. Ambrose, l. 2, de pœn. c. 9, p. 380. "Some ask for penance, so as to expect they should be immediately reconciled. They do not seek to be absolved, but only to bind the priest with themselves. For they do not cleanse their own consciences, but involve the priest's."

Not to copy out whole works, this may suffice to show us, what were the sentiments and practice of the fathers in this particular. They were the guides given us by God to conduct our souls to the true land of promise; the greatest doctors and interpreters of his law, who were instructed in its genuine spirit by the apostles and by the Holy Ghost. Unless we could pretend to have some new gospel since their time, we cannot reject their morality and rules of penance. Ah! true penitents, on the contrary, desire to be treated with rigour, better to obtain the divine pardon, for which they sue. These were the dispositions, which the pastors in the primitive ages required, before they granted absolution. Whence St. Ambrose writes, l. 1, de pœnit. c. 16, p. 365, t. 4. "I will that the sinner hope long for pardon, that he ask it with weepings, and with the tears of the whole congregation; and when his reconciliation shall have been deferred a second and a third time, that he believe his supplications had been too remiss, let him in a more miserable plight redouble his fears, then return, prostrate lay hold of the priest's feet, kiss them, wash them with tears, and not let them go, that Jesus may say of him; "His many sins are forgiven, because he loved much." I have known some, who in penance have furrowed their face with continual steams, and hollowed their cheeks in trenches with incessant weeping, have strewed their body on the ground

before all to be trampled upon by every one, and have carried, by their pale extenuated countenances, an image of death in their living bodies." St. Gregory Nazianzen, or. 39, p. 636, says: "If the Novatians, in denying reconciliation to sinners, only rejected those, who had not given sufficient proofs of a change of life, and a penance proportioned to their offences, their doctrine and practice would have been that of the Catholic church, and that he condemned none such." All zealous pastors followed this rule, which St. Gregory the great, l. 6, in 1, Reg. lays down: "Then we see a sinner truly converted, when he labours to efface what he confesses with his mouth, by a condign austerity." They feared not only false penitence, but also, lest too great a facility should be an occasion of relapses. "If a man soon return to his lost felicity, it would seem a pastime to him to fall into death by sin," as St. Augustin writes, Serm. ol. 35, de div.

6. There is a third part of the sacrament of penance, besides contrition and confession, which regards the penitent, viz. satisfaction. Baptism remits sin, without any chastisement being exacted by God in the condition of its pardon. But the case is very different in the remission of sins committed after baptism. As they are more enormous, God makes it a clause in granting this mercy, that they do not go entirely without some chastisement to be voluntarily paid by the penitent, by fasting, alms, and prayer, which are hence often said in scripture to wash away sins, and which are usually mentioned in the old and new testaments, as a part or ingredient of penance.

A sincere purpose of performing this satisfaction to the divine justice is essential to penance, both as a virtue and as a sacrament, which without it must be false and counterfeit. Indeed contrition can never be true without it; for he, who truly hates and grieves for his sin, must be sincerely resolved and desirous to expiate and efface it, to satisfy the divine justice injured by it, and to revenge the offence of God on himself, by fulfilling the laws and conditions of his mercy. A man deceived by another into some base crime, when sensible of it, would conceive a great indignation against the author of his misfortune. Penance inspires this hatred and holy revenge against a man's sin, its author and instruments, the criminal heart and flesh; especially as this is required by God. Therefore, chastisement for sin is a voluntary chastisement of ourselves, to compensate the injury done to God by sin, and to appease him. A will to perform this satisfaction is so essential to penance, that St. Augustin says: "He who truly repents does nothing else than that he does not suffer the evil which he has done, to remain unpunished; ep. 163, ol. 54, c. 3, t. p. 526. This will implies first a firm purpose of amendment of life, of shunning all mortal sin and immediate occasions of it, of practising the necessary means for that purpose, of performing the penance enjoined by the priest, and labouring, by other satisfactory works, to appease the divine justice, and entirely blot out all remains of sin.

7. The confessor is bound always to enjoin, and the penitent to accept some reasonable penance, both in satisfaction for sins, and often to serve as a remedy against a relapse; for the priest is both judge and physician. As a remedy, St. Gregory observes, the virtues contrary to each sinner's vices are to be prescribed, as alms to the covetuous, prayer to the slothful, acts of humiliation to the proud, bodily mortifications to the unchaste, and, for a part, reading or short reflection on the last things, &c. No indulgence or jubilee can dispense from the injunction of all penance in

confession though it may be a reason for giving a lesser; for nothing can strip the sacrament of one of its parts, or exempt men from the precept of doing penance on many accounts. It may be prescribed to be performed either before or after absolution. If after, it is commonly designed to be performed in the state of grace, or at least in a spirit of penance. At least, if a penitent should relapse, he ought, every time before he performs any part of it, to renew some kind of an act of contrition. It cannot be performed by another person, but by the penitent himself. A considerable delay or omission in doing it would be a mortal sin, though it would not make the past confession null and sacrilegious, if it was made with a sincere contrition and purpose of satisfaction.

A confessor is bound to impose a penance proportioned to the quality of the sin, and the ability and circumstances of the penitent; by giving too mild ones he would make himself a partaker of his crimes, as the Council of Trent warns us, Sess. xiv. c. 8. To which purpose St. Chrysostom describes in a very terrible manner the dangers of the priestly charge; De sacerd. l. c. 4, t. 1, p. 374. He is in this to have some regard to the penitential canons, though conforming himself to the present discipline of the church, which condescends very much to the weakness of her children. Hence, in regard to the more slothful, he may sometimes follow the rule of Gerson, (Tr. de parvul. ad Christ. trahend.) who repeated with William of Paris; "I had rather suffer them to fall into purgatory by too small a penance, which will be faithfully accomplished than that they should go to hell with a greater, never sufficiently performed." It is the observation of St. Chrysostom, (loc. cit.) "That many, by a smaller penance in the beginning, may be insensibly brought to perform well a greater at last, which at first they were not able to bear." It was also the saying of an ancient pastor related in the canon law, (op. imp. in Mat. hom. 43.) "If I err in giving rather too small a penance, is it not better of the two to give an account for an excess in mildness than in austerity? If God be mild, how is the priest too rigid? Be austere towards thyself, but mild to others." But there is far more danger of sinning in this point by remissness. To supply the insufficiency of present penances, he may do something for the penitent, by undertaking austerities for him himself, as St. Francis Xavier did in some such cases.

He must always admonish the penitent with strong exhortations, that he is bound, by voluntary satisfactions, to labour to supply what his injunctions are deficient in; and he may, by his intentions, raise them to a higher value, making them in some degree sacramental, by directing to this the prayer of the church after absolution, &c. which is advised by St. Antoninus, St. Thomas of Villanova, &c. "He is an unskilful physician, who pressing the swelling imposthumes with too gentle a hand, and, whilst he retains within the amassed corruption, increases the sore. The wound is to be opened and cut, and to be healed by deep incisions. Let the patient cry out, weep and complain under his pain; he will afterwards thank you, when he shall find himself cured." One of them thus addresses himself to such pretended penitents: "The sacrilegious man is angry with the priests, because he does not immediately receive the body of the Lord with polluted hands, and drink his blood with a defiled mouth. O what extravagant frenzy in you, furious madman! You are angry at him, who labours to turn from you the anger of God; you threaten him who intreats the mercy of the Lord for you; who feels your wound, which you yourself do not feel; who sheds tears for you, which perhaps you do not shed for yourself."

8. The penitent is to remember that he, who truly repents, does not fear

the labour of penance, as St. Bernard says, l. de grad. humil c. 78. They who seek indulgent confessors, to avoid proportioned penances, are guilty of a mortal sin of sacrilege, no less than those who indulge them. Such make a traffic of penance, and cannot have a true contrition any more than the devil, says St. Bernard, Serm. 35, t. 3. Let such persons remember, that St. Boniface of Mentz, St. Raymond, St. Vincent Ferririus, St. Bonaventure, Gerson, and other more modern great confessors, would order three or seven years penance, fasting three days in the week on bread and water, or wearing a hair shirt, or the like, for one mortal sin. Let them remember the more severe penitential canons of the first ages. We have no new gospel since those times. Penance is the same; sin is the same; God and his law are the same. If the tribunal of the Church is milder, this is owing to our weakness; and it only leaves it to us, by voluntary endeavours, to pay this debt to the divine justice.

We are then to receive the penance enjoined us in confession most willingly and humbly, confessing in our hearts, how much too light it is for our offences, and sincerely resolved speedily and exactly to accomplish it, in the most fervent spirit of devotion and penance, purposing to labour to supply its deficiencies by a constant practice of penance. We must receive the sentence of absolution, renewing in our souls the deepest sentiments of humility, compunction, love, gratitude, and resolution of serving God for ever with the most inviolable fidelity. We must repeat these sentiments more explicitly after confession, and, big with the most feeling sense of these dispositions, pour forth our souls, especially in thanksgiving and praise for the inestimable mercy we have received, congratulating ourselves on our present happiness; renewing our most sincere resolutions of never more injuring the divine goodness by consenting to sin; of avoiding all dangerous occasions and practising all the most powerful means to preserve ourselves from falling again into such a misfortune. This amendment of life, and the necessary measures to effect it, such as assiduous prayer, frequent use of the sacraments, the nourishing a constant spirit of penance, by repeating daily acts of hatred and sorrow of sin, penitential mortifications, &c. are the principal and most essential part of the penance to be continued to the end of our lives, and what after confession we must chiefly be solicitous about. Our earnestness on this point will be the chief proof, that our conversion was sincere. Can he be looked upon to be sincerely reconciled, who is not earnest to avoid a repetition of his past offences and treasons? Who, just recovered from a dangerous sickness, is not careful to secure himself against a relapse? Not to dread in the highest degree, and arm ourselves with all possible care against a relapse into sin, is a sure mark that our conversion was not perfect.

9. The penitent is not to imagine that, when he has performed the prayers and acts after confession, all is over, that his task is done, and that he needs not think any more of his past sins. It is absolutely necessary that he always remember, that he is a sinner, has a great debt to pay, and is bound to lead a life of continual penance; first, to satisfy the divine justice. And if he neglect this, how was his will of satisfaction sincere in the sacrament? How was the contrition true, which is followed by no fruits? Secondly, A penitential course is a necessary means to preserve him from a relapse. The devil, finding a soul empty and ready swept, *i. e.* void of the fruits of repentance, easily re-enters. This is also the law of penance, and God's express command. St. Ambrose writes thus to a

virgin, who had fallen into sin, ch. 8. "Remember that a sinner has incurred the eternal flames of hell. Be content to undergo any afflictions, any labours, providing you can be delivered from those pains." Such a life, such an action of penance, if it be perseverant, will afford hope to escape punishment at last. Let the penitent always bear in mind that maxim repeated by St. Augustin, Serm. 278, ol. 34, de div. c. 12. "He must be severe upon himself, that God may be merciful to him."[a] St. Pacian, Paræn. p. 316, says: "They who confess well their crimes in penance, yet do not use the remedy, are like those, who lay open their wounds and sores to the physicians, but neglect to do what is prescribed them, and have not the courage to take the potions that are ordered them. This is, as if one should say; Behold, I am sick; behold, I am wounded; but I will not be cured," &c. See Med. 45, on the Virtue of Penance.

10. Every one is to proportion his penance to the number and enormity of his sins. How great and what penance is necessary? "Such as may equal, or even surpass the crimes," says St. Ambrose, ad virg. laps. c. 8, And St. Cyprian; de laps. "As much as we have sinned, so much let us weep. A deep wound requires a diligent and long cure. Let not the penance be less than the crime." Hence St. Augustin writes, Serm. 351, n. 7, p. 1357. "In this penance every one ought to exercise upon himself the greater severity, that being judged by himself he may not be judged by the Lord." "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged by the Lord." 1 Cor. xi. 31. Let a man, therefore, ascend the tribunal of his soul against himself, and place himself before his own eyes. Having thus erected a judgment in his own heart, let his memory be the accuser, his conscience the witness, and fear the executioner. Let such a sentence be pronounced by him, by which he declares himself unworthy of the participation of the body and blood of the Lord," &c. The fathers then had reason to call this sacrament, a hard and laborious penance, with Origen, Hom. 2, in Luc. a baptism of tears, a severe and laborious laver, with St. Gregory Nazianzen, or. 39, who cries out, or. 40. "What an abundance of tears shall we shed, that this may equal the efficacy of baptism?" &c. A true spirit of penance will never think it has done enough. An ancient learned and pious author says very well: "Let a penitent regard all the fruits of his penance as small, as never sufficient to discharge his debt; let him always grieve, always blush before God, against whom he has sinned; let him finish his grief only with his life." l. de vera pœnit. inter op. St. Aug. t. 6, App. p. 238. And Tertullian, l. de pœnit. c. 9, p. 127. "As much as thou shalt not have spared thyself, so much, believe, will God spare thee. God will pardon only true penitents, and such as chastise sin in themselves."[b] St. Augustin in Ps. 50, p. 468. Read the examples of St. Thais, and other holy penitents among the saints.

11. To animate ourselves to a condign practice of penance, and to confound ourselves at the sight of our sloth, it will be useful to consider the primitive discipline of canonical penance in the church. We find it established very early, mentioned by Tertullian and others in the second century, and its four stages described by St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, anno 250, and others. It was maintained for many ages with extraordinary rigour. The backwardness and tepidity of sinners in submitting to undergo it obliged the church to make indulgences more frequent, and to

[a] In quantum non peperceris tibi, in tantum tibi Deus, crede, parcet.
[b] Ignocis confitenti, sed seipsum punienti.

allow communications of other good works, not so laborious or painful, in the eleventh century; by which the penitential canons, by degrees, were laid aside; though they were of some force even in the thirteenth century; for Humbert, the fifth General of the Dominicans, who died A. D. 1277, mentions the solemn imposition of penance as then in use for grievous sins. Serm. 46. We read the affecting ceremonies of that office, sufficient to soften the most hardened sinner into sentiments of compunction, in the edition of the penitential of St. Theodore of Canterbury by Le Petit. p. 21 to 79.[a]

All persons publicly guilty of any grievous sins, who did not ask, and submit to canonical penance, were excommunicated, and the faithful forbidden to have any intercourse or conversation with them. Sinners confessed first in private. If the priest judged they ought to undergo public penance, they humbly demanded it of the bishop, confessing their sins to him.* He took some time to deliberate, and to examine their dispositions. The solemn imposition of penance was on the first day of Lent. The penitent presented himself to the bishop in the church, in old torn and ragged clothes; for such were the mourning among the ancient Greeks and Latins. The bishop laid ashes on his head, and gave him a hair-cloth. The penitent then prostrated himself on the ground, whilst the bishop and clergy recited long prayers for him on their knees. After which the bishop made him a strong exhortation, saying he was going to expel him as unworthy out of the church, as God drove Adam out of paradise, but encouraging him with the hope of mercy. He then, with a push, drove him from him and out of the church; and immediately the doors were shut and locked against him.

Penitents, during their term, kept at home, never going to any markets, fairs, feasts, or diversions, employing their time in labour, prayer, lying on the bare floor, and fasting on bread and water, either every day, or as often in the week as was enjoined. They watched, gave alms largely, and and saw no company except on some necessity. On the days of stations or festivals, they went to the church, stood without the doors, begging the prayers of the faithful who entered, standing, or prostrate on the ground, in their penitential weeds.

The ranks of penitents were four; the weepers or flentes remained prostrated before the church door, in poor, dirty, rent garments, covered with hair-cloth and ashes, lamentably imploring the prayers of the faithful. These seem to have been the same who were also called hyemantes, because they stood exposed to all the injuries of the weather under no cover. The second rank was of the hearers or audientes. These were admitted into the lower part of the church, during the sermon and the gospel; but then immediately turned out with the infidels and heretics, as unworthy to join in common prayer, says St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, can. 11. The third station was of the prostrate or substrati, which was very painful, on account of the great number of genuflections, prostrations, and other humiliations and rigours which they performed. These stayed in the bottom of the church, not only during the exhortations and instructions, but also during many public prayers, which the bishop recited over them. Before the holy mysteries or sacrifice commenced, the deacon crying out from the altar: "Let the penitents and catechumens go forth;" they were turned out These were absolutely called the penitents. The fourth station was of the consistentes or standers, who assisted at the entire sacrifice of the mass,

[a] See Fleury, Mœurs de Chretiens, n. 20, Bona Liturg. l. 2, c. 7, 16, 17.

with the rest of the faithful, only that they were forbidden to communicate. The bishops often visited the penitents, exhorting, encouraging, and admonishing them, and praying over them. By St. Basil's canons, one for wilful murder passed four years among the weepers, then five among the hearers, seven more among the prostrate, and lastly, four among the consistentes, in all twenty years. For involuntary murder eleven years. For apostacy, his whole life, receiving absolution only in the article of death. He equals impurities against nature, and adulteries, with murder; but allows women for adultery to pass their whole term among the consistentes, lest a suspicion of their crime might divulge it, and be an occasion of their death. Can. 347. Not only idolatry, murder, and impurity, but most other sins were subjected to the laws of public penance, as appears from the penitential canons. Some[a] extend this to all mortal sins; but some we find excepted in several churches. Sins of thought only were comprised under the primitive laws, but seem excepted in St. Theodore's penitential, and others of a later date, and private penance and absolution alone allowed for such. No one could be admitted a second time to public penance; and sinners relapsing but once, were excluded from the sacraments till the point of death, to employ all their life in penance. Canonical penance, or a crime which deserved it, was a perpetual irregularity, debarring persons for ever from holy orders or any functions in the church.[b] For things looked upon as unseeming and imperfect, though not in themselves sinful, persons were condemned to public penance, as for second marriages to a course of one, or, in some churches, two years penance. St. Basil reports that the term was to be abridged in favour of a greater fervour, or if the sin was less deliberate.

12. Eusebius relates that the Emperor Philip being a Christian, presented himself to assist at the divine mysteries; but, as he had arrived at that dignity through murders, the bishop refused to admit him till he had ranked himself among the penitents, and made his confession, in which he obeyed. Hist. l. 6, c. 34, ol. 37. But we have a more particular and more authentic example of this in Theodosius, surnamed the great, being one of the most powerful, wisest, and greatest in all respects amongst all the Emperors, who ever wore the Roman purple. The city of Thessalonica having raised a sedition, and committed many outrages, because the governor had refused to release a malefactor, who was a famous charioteer, the Emperor, at first, designed to pardon this insult: but Rufin, the prefect of the palace, who was afterwards a great firebrand in the state, persuaded him it was necessary to make an example, and to put a great number of the citizens to the sword. Soldiers were ordered to put this sentence in execution, which they did with an unheard of cruelty. They massacred seven thousand in the Circus. A slave, offering himself to die for his master, was butchered by them. A father, seeing his two sons led to slaughter, desired to suffer in their place; the soldiers moved, promised to give him the life of one of them. The father ran from one to the other, as if distracted, not being able to make his choice, or to abandon either, and the soldiers slew them both. St. Ambrose, upon this news, wrote to the Emperor, then absent, modestly reproving the fact, ep. 59. Theodosius soon after returned to Milan, and went to the church; but St. Ambrose met him at the door, and forbad him entrance. The Em-

[a] Arnauld; le Drun, &c. [b] Read Card. d'Aguire, diss. 10, Alvap, &c.

peror excused himself, alleging that David had also sinned. The saint answered: You have imitated him in sinning; follow him also in his repentance. At this the Emperor, bursting into a flood of tears, threw himself at his feet, begging absolution with many sighs and groans. And rising, he put off his imperial robes, and spent the time, prescribed by the bishop in solitude and compunction, in a penitential habit, in his palace, for eight months, from April till Christmas. Desiring earnestly to enter the church on that solemnity, he ceased not to weep most bitterly, repeating to those who came near his person: "The beggars enter freely the holy church, but I have shut it against myself," for the Lord said: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, it shall be also bound in heaven." Rufin said to him: "I will go and intreat the bishop to loose you." The Emperor judged well, by answering: "He will not be moved." St. Ambrose spoke harshly to Rufin, saying: "How have you the face to intreat for a crime, of which you were the cause and promoter?" When he said the Emperor was coming, the holy prelate answered: "and I will send him away again. If he will change his empire into a tyranny, I will willingly lay down my life." The Emperor then entered his chamber; but St. Ambrose said to him: "What! do you presume to trample upon God's sacred laws." "No:" answered the Emperor; "I do not resist or disobey the injunctions you have laid upon me. I do not enter the church by violence, but only beg by God's mercy towards penitent sinners, that you take pity on me." St. Ambrose, before he gave him absolution, obliged him to make a law, that no man should be put to death till thirty days after his sentence. Sozomen says, that this Emperor confessed publicly his sin. St. Ambrose, in his funeral oration, relates how he came to the church, kneeling at the door in the rank of penitents, with his eyes on the ground, repeating with David; "My soul is cleaved to the pavement: Lord restore my life according to thy word." He tore his hair, struck his breast and his forehead in the bitterness of his sorrow; and after his reconciliation passed no day till his death, on which he did not bewail afresh this offence, which he had committed by surprize.

DISCOURSE XXXIX.

ON INDULGENCES.

1. INDULGENCES, or relaxations of the penitential canons, were often granted, even when they were most rigorously observed. The canons expressly lodged that authority in the bishops, when they should see reason for it, as e. g. on account of the extraordinary fervour of any penitent. "If any bishops shall be conscious of their labour, and humility, and meekness, and shall think proper to allow them any mitigation, the power shall be in them;" says the Council of Ancyra, more ancient than first general Council of Nice, can. 2, item can. 5, 22, 35. Also the general Council of Nice, can. 12, the fourth of Carthage, can. 75, St. Basil, can. 2, 7, 54, 84, St. Gregory of Nyssa, can. 4, St. Innocent I., ep. 1, &c., express the same authority in bishops.

The like indulgences were usually granted in the beginning of severe

persecutions, and on other like occasions. See St. Cyprian, ep. 54, ad convert, &c.

Likewise, at the request of the martyrs or confessors in prison for the faith, as appears from St. Cyprian, in his treatise de lapis, and in several epistles expressly upon that subject. He indeed complains often, that the too easy and too frequent requests of certain confessors were abusive, and tended entirely to destroy the discipline of penance, so that he found himself obliged frequently to refuse indulgences upon such petitions. Tertullian mentions the same practice, l. ad Mart, c. 1, and becoming himself a Montanist heretic, and denying indulgences, he reproached Pope Zephirinus for it in these words; l. de pudic, c. 22. "You extend this power to your martyrs, and none purchase the entry of the prisons to them so much as those who have lost the church. They ask peace of those, who are not secure of their own. It ought to be enough to the martyr, that he has purged his own sins. It is the part of an ungrateful and proud mind to scatter upon others, what it is a great benefit that he has obtained for himself. Who, besides only the Son of God, ever ransomed another's death by his own?" From which words it is plain, that the Catholics believed, that the communication of the martyr's merits might, by the authority of the church, expiate the penitent's sins, in lieu of their own personal austerities and satisfaction. And secondly, that these indulgences not only satisfied the church, but really remitted the temporal punishment due to sin before God. Which also appears from St. Cyprian's frequent complaint, that too easy indulgences, granted without cause, could not satisfy God, or be any more than a false peace. The same is evident from the clergy of Rome in their letter to St. Cyprian on that subject, ep. 36, p. 219, in which it is related, that the penitents having received the martyr's requests to the bishop in their favour, did not so properly beg as claim their peace, nay said they already had it also in heaven.[a] The clergy refute this, because their petition was against the gospel, and consequently a decree of assent from the bishop could not communicate to them a real indulgence in that case.

The tepidity and weakness of many penitents grew so great, that after the eighth century the church, out of a necessary condescension, allowed the bishops more frequently to mitigate or exchange the canonical penances into alms, fasts, &c., where there was a sufficient reason. Thus a Council held A. D. 895, can. 59, allowed, in certain cases, that an alms of seven pence might redeem one day's fasting, when the party was not able to fast. In the eleventh century indulgences, or redemptions of canonical penances, were granted for expeditions in the holy wars, long painful pilgrimages, and for other good works.

2. To understand the nature and meaning of an indulgence, it must be observed, that it is no pardon for sins to come, or a leave to commit sin, as some have accused the church of holding. It would be a horrible blasphemy to advance, that any authority whatsoever, even God himself, could grant such a leave, or dispense in the least sin. Nor is the Catholic doctrine of satisfaction and indulgences any ways derogatory to the sacred passion of Christ; for both are nothing else than the application of its merits to the sinner.[b] It is a capital article of the Christian faith, that

[a] Imo jam & in cælis habere se dicerent.

[b] Bossuet's Exposition, &c.

only Christ, true God and true man, was able to offer a sufficient satisfaction and atonement for sin. But, he having superabundantly satisfied for all our offences, it depends upon his will, in what manner, and how this satisfaction is to be applied to us; and it has pleased him to do this in baptism, so that it is an entire abolition of sin without the reservation of any punishment. This is a manner of justifying the sinner, conformable to his infinite goodness and mercy. In penance, for sin committed after baptism, he follows a different rule; for, though upon repentance he remits the guilt and the eternal punishment due to it, yet it is by exchanging those everlasting pains into a temporal chastisement, which he exacts from such sinners. He was, in some measure, forced to this method, on account of the greater ingratitude and perfidiousness of those, who have abused his first gifts; also that too great a facility of pardon might not be an occasion of such sinners relapsing more easily. Therefore Christ's satisfaction for us was entire, perfect, and infinite; but it belongs to him, who has purchased us this pardon with his own infinite price, to impart it to us on what conditions, under what law, and with what reserves he pleases. A king pardoning a criminal may require of him what conditions he pleases, as David obliged Semei.

We should be highly injurious and ungrateful to our merciful Saviour and the benefit of his redemption, if we should dispute its infinite merit because, in pardoning the sin of Adam, he has not discharged us of all its consequences, leaving us liable to death and to many corporal and spiritual miseries. It is sufficient for us that Christ has paid the price, by which we shall one day be entirely delivered. In the mean time we must receive with gratitude and humility each part of his benefit, waiting the progress of our deliverance, according to the order, which his divine wisdom has established for our greater good, and the better manifestation of his mercy and justice. In like manner, if he require some conditions on our side in the sacrament of penance, where in forgiving the sin he exacts some chastisement, to keep us better within the bounds of duty, the satisfying this obligation, by painful and laborious works, whether enjoined us by the church or voluntarily undertaken, has been called by the Catholic Church from the first ages, satisfaction, though it is only a condition for the application of the satisfaction of Christ. A relaxation of part of this temporal punishment or satisfaction is called an indulgence. This is the clear and full exposition of the doctrine of the Catholic Church, in a point strangely misrepresented and obscured by some; for which reason this statement is borrowed, almost in the very words, from a book approved of by the Pope, and by the voice of the whole church.

3. An indulgence therefore is a relaxation, granted by the church, of the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven. It remits not only the canonical penance enjoined by the church, but also the punishment before God, which that penance would have expiated and removed. This is clear from the ancient councils and fathers, as from Tertullian and St. Cyprian above. And indeed, if it only remitted the penance before the church, it would be prejudicial not profitable to the penitent, only reserving him to severer chastisements from God.

This doctrine of the church is clearly delivered in holy writ. Christ gave to the pastors of his church the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with the authority of binding or loosing sinners. Mat. xix. 19 and xviii. 28. This power regards not only the guilt and eternal punishment, but also

the temporal chastisement of sin, when there should be sufficient reasons, as the tradition of the church has ever understood it. St. Basil and the other fathers had recourse to this sentence of Christ, to show that the bishops could mitigate the canons towards the more fervent penitents.

St. Paul granted an indulgence to the incestuous Corinthian, at the prayers of that church for him, and lest he should be overcome by too great sorrow or dejection. "To whom you have pardoned any thing, I also, for your sakes have I done it in the person of Christ," i. e. by his authority. 2 Cor. xi. 10. By this sentence he remitted the remainder of the punishments he had imposed on him, and which he ought to have undergone; which was a true indulgence. See the fathers on this passage. St. Chrys. hom. 4 in 2 Cor. Theodoret, ib. St. Ambrose, l. 1, de pæn. c. 6, St. Pacian, ep. 3, &c.

4. In granting an indulgence the church applies, for the remission of part of the temporal punishment due to sin, the inexhaustible treasure of Christ's merits; which power she received from him, not to be used at random, but by a prudent dispensation, and when there is a sufficient cause, e. g. at the joint intercession of the faithful. Thus did St. Paul act in regard to the Corinthian, at the intreaties of that church. Thus did the bishops in the first ages, at the prayers of the martyrs. Thus does the church now grant indulgences to particular persons considering the joint prayers of multitudes of God's servants, applying the merits of the whole to those, who stand in need of a greater satisfaction; and this by virtue of the communion of saints, by which all in the state of grace are partakers in each other's good works. Those, who would take scandal at this doctrine, do not consider, that the merits of all the members of Christ are nothing but from and in the merits of their sacred head, which alone are applied by all the means, by which we can draw down his mercy and graces on ourselves or on others. Nor do they consider, that God often inspires his servants, as he did Moses and the prophets, with a desire to humble and afflict themselves in fasting, sackcloth, and ashes, not only for their own sins, but for those of their whole people, and that he mercifully accepts the humble sacrifices and voluntary mortifications of some to diminish the chastisements, which he prepared for others or for the whole people; which shows that, appeased by some, he is pleased to be made propitious to others, honouring by this means his Son Jesus Christ in the communion of his members, and in the holy society of his mystical body. For this the ancient penitents were taught so earnestly to solicit the prayers of the rest of the faithful, to which also the bishops recommended them frequently. Whence St. Augustin, in a sermon to his people in Ps. lxi. showing a man to them, who had believed in superstitious books of judiciary astrology, tells them, that after his earnest repeated entreaties, and a long trial to examine the sincerity of his repentance, he had admitted him to enter a course of public penance for the pardon of his sins; adding, "Pray for him through the merits of Jesus Christ; make him partaker of the prayers, which you will offer to the divine majesty. For we know and are assured, that your prayers will efface all his sins." T. 4.

5. The most solemn, ample, and universal indulgence is that called a jubilee. Amongst the Jews every seventh year was holy, and called sabbatic, during which it was unlawful to till or sow the ground; whence the name, sabbatic, indicating that the land was to rest for that year. But after seven times seven, the fiftieth year was the most sacred, and

called the jubilee. In this year not only all tillage was forbidden, but it was also ordained, that all Jewish slaves should be set at liberty, and that all lands, which had been sold, or in any other manner alienated, should be restored to their first owners. See Lev. xxv. This jubilee year was a figure of the deliverance of mankind from the slavery of sin and of the devil by Jesus Christ, as the fathers agree, and as appears from the manifest allusion to it in a prophecy concerning the Messias in Isaiah, lxi. 1, 2, which Christ declared accomplished in himself. Luke iv. 18.

The Popes are accustomed to grant, during the whole course of every twenty fifth year, a plenary indulgence, with the most ample privileges, to all confessors, of dispensing in certain vows and cases usually reserved to the superior pastors of the church; and this is now commonly called a jubilee of the new law, as in it, it is hoped, that the slaves of the devil and of sin may be restored to perfect liberty, and all their debts remitted. The term was at first every hundreth year; it was afterwards reduced to fifty, then to thirty-three years, and at last fixed at twenty-five. The conditions to obtain it were formerly a pilgrimage to Rome; visiting there devoutly every day, during fifteen days, the three principal churches of that city and the christian world; praying for the exaltation of the holy church, the extirpation of heresies, the peace and concord of sovereigns and states, and the salvation and tranquillity of the christian people; together with sacramental confession and communion. Pilgrimages performed in a spirit of rambling and dissipation, out of curiosity, vanity, sloth, or other human views, are vicious rather than works of virtue. Even with the best intentions they are unlawful to many, whom necessary affairs, or duties to a wife, family, &c., require to remain at home. Many councils have condemned abuses in pilgrimages. St. Gregory of Nyssa justly reprehends them, though he approves of pilgrimages devoutly performed; Vit. 3, Macrin. p. 177. He testifies that the sight of the holy places had filled his soul with sentiments of piety, joy, and pleasure, ep. ad Eustathiam, Ambrosiam, & Basilissam, p. 1088. And it is well known, that no one ever did more to embellish, and recommend devotion to the tombs of the martyrs. But, as St. Jerom says, (ep. ad. Paulin, p. 563, t. 4,) "It is not commendable to have been at Jerusalem, but to have lived well at Jerusalem." Yet no one could more extol devotion to the holy places, and pilgrimages to them, than the same holy doctor, who chose his retreat among them. See ep. 86, ad Eustoch. p. 673, ep. ad. Desider. p. 562, &c. We may see his sentiments in the letter of his spiritual daughters Paula and Eustochium to Marcella; where they say, that it would be too long to name all the eminent bishops, martyrs, and most holy and learned men, who, from our Lord's ascension, had in every age gone to Jerusalem, thinking that something was wanting to their religion, and that they had not finished their career of virtues, unless they had adored Christ in those places, p. 550, and that the most holy men among the Gauls, the remote Britons, the Armenians, Persians, Indians, Ethiopians, Egyptians, Asiatics, &c., flocked thither in crowds, &c. The writings of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, the life of St. Porphyry of Gaza, &c., furnish us with early testimonies and examples of those pious pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Eusebius, the oldest christian historian extant, relates, (Hist. l. 6, c. 11,) that St. Alexander, a bishop of Cappadocia, came to Jerusalem, by a divine admonition, to visit and pray in the holy places. St. Chrysostom, (l. Quod Christus sit Deus, t. l. p. 570, n. 9,) says; "In Rome emperors, consuls,

and commanders of armies run to the sepulchres of the fisherman and tent-maker." He expresses his most ardent desires of visiting, devoutly venerating, and kissing them. Hom. 32, in Rom. t. 9, p. 757. The example of saints, emperors, kings, and especially of our kings of the Saxon race, who have devoutly performed this pilgrimage to Rome, ought alone sufficiently to demonstrate, that, if piously undertaken and fulfilled, it is a good work and an act of religion.

Devout pilgrims make their journey in a laborious painful manner, many on foot, many bare-foot, employing much of their time, on the road, in prayer and meditation.

The sight of the holy instruments of Christ's passion and other great relics, and of the places themselves consecrated by the blood of many martyrs, must inflame a christian heart with ardent sentiments of devotion, as experience shows; for the presence of such objects is the most moving sermon to a devout mind. If Seneca expresses his feeling remembrance of the great Scipio Africanus, from the sight of his house, gardens, &c., must we not confess, that the most lively images and remains of the great mysteries of our redemption cannot fail to fill a christian soul with the most awful sentiments of religion? It must also be an act of religion to visit and honour them. Add, that the blessing of the chief pastor and father of the christian world, the principal church, and the centre of Catholic unity, are objects of religious veneration. The joining in the universal assembly of the church, in prayer, is a kind of besieging almighty God, and an acceptable violence offered to him to disarm his justice, and draw down his mercy, as well as a homage the more honourable to him, as it is the more public and universal. Hence in the old law God himself commanded, that every male amongst the Jews should appear in the temple thrice every year, viz., on the three great festivals. Deut. xvi.

But, as such a pilgrimage is to many impossible, to others unlawful, often dangerous, and a work of supererogation to all, the Popes usually extend the privileges and indulgences of the jubilee to all distant places the year following. Extraordinary jubilees are sometimes granted on other great public occasions; but these never perfectly equal the solemnity or all the privileges of the holy year.

A jubilee differs from other plenary indulgences, inasmuch as it is more universal and more certain, being grounded on greater causes; and as the ample privileges of certain dispensations are annexed to it, which are to be learned from the bull of the indication of each jubilee.

A plenary indulgence is a relaxation not of the whole of the canonical penance; but, on strong proofs of sincere repentance, and after the performance of penitential works, of such parts of it as have not yet been accomplished, and of a proportional part of the temporal punishment of sin, which it would have expiated.

Indulgences of forty, a hundred, &c., days, are a relaxation of a canonical penance of so many days, and of the temporal punishment corresponding to it.

Indulgences applicable to the dead differ very much from the others; for the church having no jurisdiction over the dead, who are no longer its subjects, they are not any sort of absolution; but merely an application of the treasure of the church or merits of the faithful servants of God, through the communion of saints, by way of suffrage or prayer only; nor is their effect as certain as in the others. Hence neither the Pope nor any eccle-

siastical authority can free souls out of purgatory, as the enemies of the church jeeringly object; for these indulgences only serve to make prayers and sacrifices more powerful in their favour; nor would they be valid, if granted unreasonably, without cause, and in such a manner as any ways to obstruct the laws established by God for the manifestation of his justice; which laws are not infringed by the reasonable interposition of his mercy, when there is sufficient cause, any more than reprieves or privileges, on extraordinary occasions, obstruct the execution of justice or laws in a temporal court.

Indulgences are usually granted upon the same reasons as we find in the earliest antiquity, viz., through the intercession of the martyrs and saints, and the communication of their good works; or the joint prayers of the faithful for this remission of the debts of sinners to God. This reason seemed just to St. Paul; this the pastors of the church in the several ages of its discipline looked upon as sufficient. Thus at present indulgences are granted at great assemblies of the faithful in prayer, and to confraternities, in which all enrolled are partakers, in a particular manner, of one another's good works, as is the case in those annexed to certain religious orders, and also to simple confraternities, as that of the name of Jesus, in which, amongst other indulgences, one of a hundred days is granted for stopping blasphemers, swearers, &c. Thus indulgences are most frequently granted for some cause, greatly tending to promote some virtuous practices, and joined with many other holy endeavours, to which a spiritual recompense and supply is added from the treasure of the church by him, to whom God has committed the dispensation of it on earth. One hundred days indulgence was granted by Pope Gregory XIII. and some ancient councils, to all who devoutly accompany the viaticum to the sick.

A great reason of indulgences also is, to recompense the extraordinary fervour of a penitent, or to supply his impossibility or weakness in satisfying for his sins, whilst he earnestly desires to do it to the utmost of his power, as in the article of death, or anciently in the commencement of violent persecutions.

St. Bonaventure, Cardinal Bellarmin, &c. teach, that indulgences are null, if not founded on causes, which bear some degree of proportion to them; otherwise the discipline of penance would be enervated by too great a profuse concession of them. The treasure of the church is committed by God to its chief pastor to be administered according to his holy laws, not to annul and destroy them. This would not be a faithful dispensation, but a cruel dissipation, to use the words of St. Bernard, l. 3, de cons. c. 4, of too easy and excessive a concession of indulgences. St. Cyprian, (Tr. de laps. p. 173,) writes: "Communion is given to inconsiderate penitents by the rashness of some against the severity of the gospel, against the law of the Lord God. A peace false and null, dangerous to the givers, and not to be of any profit to the receivers." The authority given by God is not unlimited; the pastor of the church is but his delegate, and is tied down to follow his laws. If he exceed his commission, the supreme judge will not ratify what is done against his will, though it is to be hoped, that he will not permit his vicar to commit such abuses. The provincial synod of Cambray orders curates to admonish their flocks, that no credit is to be given to books publishing indulgences for small light things; which decree is more severely repeated by the provincial council of Mechlin, A. D. 1570, approved by Pope Paul V. The

council of Trent forbids indulgences to be published, unless revised by the ordinary.

None are to be received but what are authentic. See the Roman Index v. Indulgences, &c.

7. A plenary indulgence or jubilee is an exceeding great mercy offered to us, by which, in case of our sincere repentance, charity, and other good dispositions, the gates of heaven may be as readily opened to us as to the martyrs; a grace which completes and consummates the great work of our justification, perfectly purifies our souls, making them without spot or stain, and restores the happy state, to which holy baptism had raised them. This is a means not granted to David, Moses, or many other great saints and illustrious penitents; yet God's mercy offers it to us. We fear heavy debts remaining from former sins; we fear new debts, which we daily contract afresh and increase: can we neglect a means of wiping off the whole account by an entire application of the merits of Christ for that purpose? The saints were most fervent and solicitous to partake of the like mercy. Witness St. Charles Borroméo, &c., &c.

8. The conditions, required to obtain the indulgence, are to be fervently fulfilled. Usually, these are vocal prayer in a certain public place of devotion for the intentions prescribed, and some think explicitly for each; others think it sufficient to pray in general for the intentions requisite. The most common are, for the exaltation of the Catholic church, the conversion of heretics, and peace amongst christian princes. This must be done in the state of grace. The other conditions are holy communion on the day fixed, and confession preceding it, within a time near enough for a moral conjunction with this indulgence.

DISCOURSE XL.

ON THE DANGERS OF THE WORLD.

The two great causes of spiritual darkness are, first, sin and the love of creatures; secondly, a neglect of conversing with God, and of sufficient commerce with spiritual things. First: A soul, always occupied on vanity and earthly things, conceives an esteem and love of them. By ever beholding, hearing, tasting, loving, and possessing them she is filled with them, and becomes blind, deaf, lame, cold, stupid, and insensible to spiritual things. Thus "the earth has devoured them." Exod. xv. 12. On which text Origen in Exod. ib. writes thus: "When thou seest a man, whose thoughts are all of the earth, who acts for it, speaks of it, desires it alone; doth not look up to heaven, doth not think on the things to come, doth not fear the judgments of God, nor desire his promises: when thou seest such a one, say: The earth has devoured him." Created objects, if loved, have this quality, that they seduce the heart, and then blind the understanding. "For the enchantment of fooleries obscures good things, and the inconstancy of passion perverts sense." Wisdom, iv. 12. Especially passions and sin blind the soul, wed her to this earth, and extinguish in her the feeling, and blot out the true ideas of heavenly truths. As a little dust or smoke, though it doth not blind, yet injures the sight of the eye; so the least venial sin, the least passion, or the least attachment to

creatures, obscures the spiritual sight of the soul, darkens the knowledge of God, and abates the fervour of heavenly desires. Therefore, to dispel the clouds, which the world casts over our souls, we must draw our affections from it; this must be done by self-denial, and the mortification of all the senses, especially where there is danger of any eager earthly attachment.

The second cause of this blindness is, a want of sufficient diligence in prayer, meditation, and pious reading, by which we might withdraw ourselves from the earth. As this malady is caused by conversing too much with the world, its cure must be wrought by sometimes retiring from it by prayer. St. Ambrose says (l. de fugâ sec. c. 5, t. l. p, 458.) "We must with Moses put off our shoes, that is, all earthly affections, and fly to the mountains, sequestered from the world." And in another place, (l. de bono mortis, t. 5, p. 382.) "Our soul must soar on high as the eagle, must mount above the clouds, and penetrate the heavens. The bird which falls low is often taken in nets, or caught in bird-lime, or entangled in snares. So is our soul. There is a snare in gold, bird-lime in silver, a pin in fond affections." If the obstacles are removed, then the divine light will shine upon us.

Again, God is the light. "I am the light of the world; he that follows me, walketh not in darkness. John viii. 12. The nearer therefore, we approach to God, and the more we converse with him, the more we are enlightened. Also, by considering well spiritual things, we learn to know and esteem them, and receive a taste of them.

Lastly, God's light and grace is to be obtained by being fervently asked of him, who is the giver of all good gifts, and has ordained prayer to be their channel. We must then ask it, without ceasing, for ourselves and for a blind world. Nothing but prayer can unseal its eyes. "What shall I do to help one, whom his fever has made distracted? Pray for such;" says St. Augustin in Ps. 39. That member must be dead, that feels not its own pain; that patient must be incurable, who is grown insensible of his disease.

What makes the world far more the object of the christian's hatred and abhorrence is, that it is the declared enemy of God, and of his holy law. Christ every where thunders out his curses against it. "Wo to the world." Matt. xviii. "It hates me, because I give testimony that its works are evil." John vii. 7. "I am not of the world." John viii. 23. "My kingdom is not of this world." John xxiii. "If the world hate you, know it hated me before you." John xv. 18. "Because you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you." John xv. 19. "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world." John xvii. 16. "I pray not for the world." Ib. v. 15. "The spirit of truth, which the world cannot receive." John xiv. 17.

The apostles could not but deliver the same doctrine with their divine master. St. James says: "The friendship of this world is the enemy of God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God." James iv. 4. And St. John, "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man loves the world, the charity of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. "The whole world is seated in wickedness." 1 John v. 19.

When we were enlisted into God's family, we renounced, in our baptismal vows, the world and its pomps no less than the devil. It is then an

article of our faith, that we are to look upon and treat the world as our open enemy, and the enemy of our God; and that a christian who loves the world, and is imbued with its spirit, is a prevaricator, guilty of a breach of his allegiance to his God, a renegade and a traitor.

What are we to understand by this world so hateful to Christ? Not the material frame of this universe, of which God is the author. Not all men who live in it; for God's servants, nay, the apostles themselves would then be condemned. But the number of these is small, in comparison of the great body of mankind, from which they differ in their spirit and manners. Hence, though they live in the world, they are not of the world. By it then is meant the great bulk of mankind, who govern themselves by the spirit and maxims of the passions, of the flesh, of the love of vanities and earthly pleasures.

This world is declared the enemy of virtue, and loaden with the most dreadful curses of heaven, because it is full of sin, and all made up of vanity, danger of sin, bad maxims, and a spirit opposite to that of Christ. It is full of sin, because seated in wickedness. 1 John v. All, who are of it, are represented in scripture as composing a body of men, who have ranged themselves under the standard of Lucifer, and shaken off the yoke of Christ and his obedience; they are marked with the character of the devil, and as members of his kingdom. Hence the devils are called the princes of the world. This is the true Babylon described by the prophets, as the retreat of dragons, and the abode of devils; its houses filled with wild beasts, ostriches, and owls, which represent all vices; satyrs dancing in it, and syrens dwelling in its palaces of delights, i. e. devils inhabiting the souls of worldlings. Yet every thing in the world is not sin; and its innocent objects may be made a good use of; but every thing in it is vanity and danger, and is made by the wicked an instrument of sin.

"All that is in the world," says St. John, "is concupiscence of the flesh, and concupiscence of the eyes, and pride of life." 1 John ii. 10. These are the three sources of sin, viz., the pleasures of the senses, covetousness, and pride of life, or love of honours, applause, &c. Every thing in the world may be made an object of one of these; and it breathes nothing but what tends to flatter these sources of all the passions, and to inspire their maxims; consequently every thing in it is a danger to the unguarded.

It is of the sinful world that the prophet says: "God will rain down snares upon sinners." Ps. x. 7. What a number of snares must it be filled with for them to be compared to drops of rain? snares upon all ages and degrees; snares in riches and in poverty, in honours and in disgrace, in prosperity and in adversity, at home and abroad. Every one of a man's own senses and faculties lays snares in his way; nor can he make one step without meeting with many. The prophet Jeremiah had reason to cry out, xlviii. 43. "Snares upon you, O inhabitants of the earth" Did God open our eyes, as St. Athanasius tells us he did St. Anthony's, to see the whole world covered with snares entangled in one another, so that not a step could be made, which could escape them, we should exclaim with that holy hermit: "Oh! who shall be able to avoid them all? We heard a voice from heaven which answered humility." It is only a great distrust in ourselves, fear, watchfulness, and prayer, that can secure us from them. What makes our danger the greater is, that we carry about within ourselves a triple concupiscence, of itself eager to catch at every bait laid in each snare. A man, that is carrying gunpowder, how careful, how wary

is he to meet with nothing, that can set it on fire? I have often admired the most scrupulous and excessive cautions used in that regard in armies, and in powder-magazines; notwithstanding which, accidents sometimes happen. Alas! we carry in our bosom a concupiscence more easily kindled than gun-powder. Can we flatter ourselves with security, whilst we walk amidst the dangers, nay play with them, and delight ourselves in them, without the least precaution or guard? "You love bird-lime, yet hope not to be caught in it," says St. Augustin. How ought we to deplore blind worldings, when we see them careless and negligent amidst such infinite dangers? What wonder if the the world should be full of the miserable wrecks of souls? Not one ship in a thousand of those, that sail in the ocean, is lost; nor is one man in a hundred of those, that go to war, slain; but we may with tears say, how few souls escape in the sea of this world?

The spirit and maxims of the world show still more clearly how much it is an enemy to God, as light and darkness are not more opposite than they are to those of the gospel. Christ came to destroy the first Adam, whose birth, and consequently inclinations and affections are earthly, according to the flesh and the instinct of nature corrupted by its fall. This old man and his spirit still reigns in the world, and is the spirit of the world. The new man, or the man of grace, created and planted by Christ is built upon the destruction of the former, and is directly its opposite. This studies in all things to crucify the old man with his acts, and to live only by the movements of grace. His spirit therefore is the contrary to the former; so are also his acts, inclinations, and maxims, which are in each conformable to their spirit.

If we compare together the maxims of the world and those of Jesus Christ, we shall find the one the very contrast of the other. The world applauds, pursues, and endeavours to inspire all persons with an esteem of earthly grandeur, honours, riches, vain amusements, and delights. These are its beatitudes. Christ teaches to banish the foolish joys of the world, and the pleasures of the senses; to love humility and compunction; to be silent under calumnies, patient and meek under injuries and persecutions; to imitate an infant's simplicity; to hate hypocrisy and dissimulation; to mortify the flesh, and shun every thing in the world, that is apt to inflame any branch of concupiscence. He preaches the happiness of the cross, and beatifies poverty of spirit, meekness, and the like. If we desire to be disciples and members of Christ, we must be animated and live by his spirit, and have his sentiments. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Jesus Christ." Phil. ii. 5. "Whosoever have been baptized in Christ, you have put on Christ." Gal. iii. 27.

It concerns us to examine what our spirit is, that of God or of the world, that we may discover to which of the two we belong. Many christians are for making a medley of their opposite maxims, and, whilst they would fain reconcile them both together, create to themselves a spirit of their own choosing according to their fancy, which they would flatter themselves not to be contrary to that of the gospel. They pray and detract with the same tongue; frequent both churches and play-houses; give pence in alms, and squander away pounds in vanities; and so as to other things. Such a contradiction in manners shows they are strangers to the true spirit of Christ. The false mother cries: "Let the child be divided." 3 Kings iii. 26. The world is content to get part of the heart; but God, the true sovereign, will have all: all is his due; and his sanctity can allow no society with the world. Those then who find passions, such as pride, a

love of ease or pleasures, or the like, reigning in their breasts, though they comply with some duties of religion, and call themselves disciples of Christ, yet in reality belong to the world, and are condemned by him according to the degree, in which more or less of its spirit reigns in their hearts.

The world is the more the object of a true christian's fear and horror, as it is contagious. The holy Scriptures, the fathers, and all other masters of a spiritual life, and daily experience proclaim aloud on every side this its most pernicious quality. In short, three reflections will suffice to set this truth in a clear light. First, on the frequency, with which its vanities strike the senses; secondly, on the malignancy of its conversation: and thirdly, on the powerful influence of its example. As to the first, we must remember, that the heart of man has contracted from sin a triple concupiscence easy to be set in a flame; nay, more ready to catch fire than tinder from the contact of a burning coal. This is an inordinate love of whatever gratifies the senses, a secret pride and ambition or itch of any present apparent glittering grandeur, and covetousness, or love of riches. Now, almost every thing in the world is to this inward fomes peccati or source of sin, what flame is to touch-wood, unless it be restrained and curbed. Yet its objects of vanity environ us on every side, in an infinite number, and constantly besiege and lay snares to our hearts, as they never cease to strike our senses, and through them assault our hearts. It is an old proverb, that even drops often falling at length make furrows in the hardest stone, as we daily see. What effect then will not these objects have on our weak souls, if we consider on one side, how continually they beat upon all our senses, and on the other, how naturally concupisence is disposed to receive their impressions. The principles of morality, engrafted in our souls, make, indeed, some resistance; but without an extraordinary watchfulness, courage, and grace, these imperceptible seductions gain the affections, sow their seed, insensibly extinguish those of virtue, and growing habitual become a second nature. And this is the condition of the far greater part of those, who live in the world, some in a greater, some in a lesser degree.

The ordinary conversation of the world is malignant. For the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart; and the hearts of the men of the world are filled with its false maxims and spirit. Some philosophers tell us, that a toad is nothing but a compound of poison; for whereas other venomous creatures carry their poison in one part, as in a hollow of the teeth, (which in such always hang loose) or in their tail or sting, the toad has nothing in it, either skin, flesh, blood, or other fluid, &c. which is not poisonous as long as it lives. So we may say that the heart of the perfect worldling is a mere compound of the poison of the world. It has greedily received all its impressions almost without resisting any of them, unless by some other passion; thus its affections become all worldly, and it is made up, as it were, of almost nothing else than its spirit, its errors, and its passions, except some remains of the seeds of virtue, that are not entirely blotted out. These principles of moral virtue still remaining, or at least good-breeding, a fear of losing his reputation, or common politeness will have sufficient power yet to restrain his tongue from open lewdness and impiety; but must not his whole conversation tend to convey into the hearts of others the images of those objects and passions, of which his own is full? Even if he disguise them under the hypocrisy of some affected virtue, the heart will still betray itself; and if this danger be not

perceived the poison will only operate the more surely on even a virtuous hearer, as he will be the less guarded against it. On which account St. Teresa gives it as an important advice, that no one choose a director, whose actions should seem to discover any tincture of vanity; because, even under the most elegant instructions of humility, that would occultly insinuate itself into the hearer, and the more deeply as its dart would be the less suspected. How much more will this be true of a man quite devoured by several passions, how much soever he outwardly conceal them?

The influence of worldly discourse is the greater, as the heart, whatsoever words are used, has a language of its own, and that the most moving, by which it immediately speaks to the heart of the hearer. Dry words may please the ear, and gain applause on any subject, but will not reach the heart; whereas words spoken from the heart are sure to strike it home. Moreover a language from the heart speaks not only by the tongue, but also by the accent, by the looks, by the actions and gestures, and by the whole man at once; and, in like manner, it enters the hearer not only by the ears, but by all his senses together. How powerful must be its stroke upon his unguarded and open heart? If men of the world are not all so totally possessed by a worldly spirit (which God forbid) it must be still granted, that, as they have more or less of it, so their conversation will be more or less contagious in communicating the poison of this spirit. May we not then say of the ordinary conversation of worldlings, what Socrates said of two vain women together, that they were mutually communicating each other's venom to one another?

May we not subscribe to the statement of the fathers, that the world is the school of the devil? Consequently whoever is always in its vortex must almost always hear his interpreters, and organs, if not speak in his name. But men cry out, where is this general communication in the conversation of the world, if swearers, detractors, lewd and profane talkers be avoided? The danger and crime are not indeed so great, when declared libertines are shunned as much as possible; but if we speak of men of the world, that is, imbued with its spirit, (from whom we must distinguish men in the world, who are not of it) does not all their discourse and behaviour tend to imprint in others self-love, self-conceit, and the esteem, love, and desires of pomp, riches, and pleasures, together with a hatred and contempt of holy mortification, humiliations, and of whatever they themselves hate and contemn? Is it possible, that such repeated lectures, so strongly dictated and enforced, should not affect unguarded minds? They must insensibly be worked upon, and a passion for earthly goods will expel that christian moderation, with which the true spirit of the gospel looks upon them as, on the one hand, gifts of God granted in trust for the purpose of virtue and charity, and, on the other, as surrounded with dangers and snares. That converse with the world, which seems indifferent, is at best unprofitable, and of great service to the devil, as it accustoms men's hearts to unprofitableness, sloth, curiosity, and amusement.

The contagion of the world is most strengthened by the force of custom and example, which has incredible power in all things, and is here a torrent, that violently bears down all before it, not to be resisted but by a firm virtue and strong grace. Even in virtue, the example of one single man will make more converts than eloquent sermons, as we read of St. Charles Borromèo and others. Lessons by example are perpetual; they never cease, and are never interrupted. They are communicated in a more imperceptible insinuating way, without the appearance of precept or authority,

and enter the heart by all the senses at once. We see the force of custom in the world, in the most indifferent, and even in the most difficult and painful things, and which require the utmost constraint. A comparison of our dresses, manners, and customs with those of China and Japan, or even of the Isle of St. Kilda, or countries still nearer us, and some under the same government, will furnish us with most wonderful instances of this. And is not custom at home, even in things the most superfluous, and sometimes also ridiculous, a law, which no one dares to contradict, and which makes things highly valued or despised by turns, and is the cause of the strongest prejudices of entire nations? If any thing be but the fashion, this suffices for all. This influence of custom is much greater in what flatters the passions. Can we then wonder, that it is so powerful in the world, in which the lives of men are generally only a display of pride and the triumph of concupiscence, and whose whole conduct proclaims the love, esteem, and felicity of what a christian is taught by faith to despise, hate, and fear.

What can be the reason why the great truths of our holy religion make so small an impression on christians? Such is their tremendous importance, and such their undoubted certainty, that nothing is more wonderful than that men, who believe them, should lead lives so little conformable to them. Alas! it is the torrent of example. They see others live in the spirit of the world; hence they soon forget the pious sentiments they had conceived in fervent meditation, and think they must live as others do. They even strain to its law the very precepts of the gospel, and behave as if salvation were easy and secure, because they see others do so. It is very difficult and extraordinary for any one to have the courage to single himself out in the fervent service of God, and break through the prejudice of the crowd. Notwithstanding meditations, sermons, alarms of conscience, and frequent calls of God, men still are carried with the stream.

God's mercy has provided us with all-powerful antidotes against this contagion. If vanities assault our hearts through our senses, the visits of grace are no less frequent; these we must open our hearts to and shut them to the others, hedging them round with the thorns of horror and dread against them. Our senses are to be restrained and accustomed to denials, by frequent mortification, that they never may seek greedily to be gratified. As to the company of the world, far be it from our hearts to judge any one in particular to be of a worldly spirit; but let us shun long or much conversation with those, from whose words or demeanour we fear danger to ourselves, mixing with them only as much as charity and decency may require; and, during such company, raising our hearts often with fervour to God, to keep ourselves in spirit with him. Let that be our usual company, by which our hearts may be most improved and warmed in virtue. The less we can have of this, the more leisure we must reserve to converse and renew our spirit with God. In short, our grand preservatives are, mortification, prayer, meditation, good books. The oftener we we are exposed to hear vanity, the more diligently must we listen to God.

St. Francis of Sales weighed this with his ordinary holy discretion, when writing to a lady, who had desired his advice for the education of two daughters, one designed for a nunnery, the other for the world, he tells her, (b. 4, ep. 46,) that the latter required much the greater care to be formed early to virtue, and by the practice of prayer and meditation to be armed against the greater dangers of the world, and enabled to resist its example and false maxims. For a christian in the world must be like a

rock, beaten on every side by the tempest, yet standing unmoved. St. John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother's womb, yet prepared himself by a most severe penitential life and long solitude, before he would appear in the world.

DISCOURSE XLI.

ON THE CONTEMPT OF THE WORLD.

1. Such are the motives, which faith suggests to inspire a christian with a contempt of the world, that one would think it ought to be easy and even natural to him to despise it. But the misfortune is, that few seriously consider them. To recapitulate some heads of them; let us reflect, that the world and its enjoyments are emptiness, vanity, and real evils and trouble. St. Thomas of Villanova, Serm. in Luc. x. compares men, labouring in it, to madmen sweating and toiling to death, to push a great rock out of its place, which if they could do, it would be nothing to the purpose, while they neglected the most important business. Gerson, (Serm. contra avar.) uses another comparison; viz. that men, who seek for happiness in the world, are like fools, who should with great pains seek for roses and tulips on nettles and briars, where they could only prick and perpetually wound themselves, instead of meeting with the flower they sought.

2. The world is not only emptiness, but also all treachery and deceit. And it is now so worn out, and its cheats so fully discovered by long experience, according to the observation of St. Augustin, ep. 45, ad Arment., that it ought long ago to have lost its painted false charms to deceive. Were but its falsehood and miseries truly understood, no one would want any other motives to be weary of it. O traitor world, thou promisest all good, and givest all evils; thou promisest life, and givest death; thou promisest joy, and givest sorrow; thou promisest rest, and behold trouble and disturbance. What advantages have all, who ever adored thee, reaped from thee? Only present toil, anxiety and misery, and future torments. O! wert thou exposed in thy true colours! every one, that beheld thee, would be startled, and fly back from thee. Nah. iii. 7.

3. The world is still more the object of the christian's horror, because it is the enemy of his soul, and of his God, loaden with his curses. He was obliged solemnly to abjure it, and renounce for ever all society with it, before he could be enrolled in God's service. It, on the other side, studies by all arts and stratagems, and frequently by open violence, to draw him from his allegiance to God, never ceasing in its attacks, by baits and false charms, by threats and terrors, and by false maxims and errors; amoribus, terroribus, erroribus, as St. Augustin says, l. de corrept. & gr. c. 35.

4. Although the world had really something worth our affections, and its goods were true and great, it ought still to be despised for God and and his kingdom. It is the law of traffic to renounce less goods to acquire greater, as St. Hilary says in Psal. cxviii.[a]

[a] Negotiatio est aliquid amittere ut majora lucreris.

Again; a soul is too noble to prostitute her affections on a base world. She is created for God, and capable of enjoying him. "He, who is greater than the world, can desire nothing of the world," says St. Cyprian, ep. ad Donat.

5. If we do not renounce the world, we renounce God: for they are correlative.

Christ our leader, our captain, our king, and our God, has taught us to despise and conquer the world by his example and victory over it. "He who follows Christ, how can he so much as look on the vanities of the world, when he sees Christ has crucified them in his own flesh?" cries out St. Ambrose, Serm. 5, in Ps. 118. He has shown us how contemptible all its goods are, by his contempt and privation of them. "Carendo vilia fecit," says St. Augustine, l. de vera relig. c. 16, and to inspire us with confidence against it, he has already conquered it for us. Confide: "I have overcome the world." John xvi. 14.

6. But a soul, that truly loves God, and has tasted the incomparable sweetness of his charms and love, wants no other motive to contemn and hate the world; as she finds it a country, which is a stranger to her God, and in which men live in a forgetfulness of him. If she has been employed ever so short a time in it, she is like a young fawn, that has lost its dam; though it be tired and quite spent, it cannot rest, but runs still with all its strength till it find her. "So," says the devout Suso, (Dial. 6, p. 37,) "do I fly again to thee, O living fountain, sighing with the most ardent thirst. One little hour with thee is a year. Nay, to have passed one day without thy commerce would seem to a soul, that loves thee, a thousand years." The world and its converse must be all bitterness to such a heart.

7. Happy is he, who is not of the world; but far more happy he who, moreover, hears no news of it, knows not what passes in it. It is sufficient for him to know there is a world to pray for, without any further information about it; as the reformed Cistercians at la Trappe, who never hear how it goes on, only pray for it, without any communication whatsoever with it. How charming is the eulogium, which the Roman martyrology gives to our holy princess, St. Editha, consecrated to God in a monastery as soon as born into the world, that she "rather never knew the world than forsook it." She passed through this life always an entire stranger to its vanities and crosses, and to its sins and dangers.

8. Happy are they also who, even later in life, and in a less degree, have fled from the commerce of the world, by renouncing it, and hiding themselves in monasteries and desarts, if they have perfectly forsaken it not only in body, but also in affection and desire, and really entertain or seek no other communication with it than to labour to sanctify it.

The true christian has his heart fixed only on God and on heavenly goods, remembering he is a stranger here. A traveller looks on all he sees on his road only as passing by, and with indifference; he takes no part in shows, fairs, or other things on his way, any further than to cast an eye upon them, and immediately leave them behind him. That passing glance does not make any impression on his heart; nor does he place his pleasure in them, because he seeks that only at home; his heart is bent on his journey's end. Thus the Christian remembers always, that "he has no permanent city here, but seeks that to come." Heb. xiii. 14. His heart and his joy is there. He makes a moderate use of the lawful comforts, which God allows in this life, but only as passing, and without

setting his mind upon them, considering, as St. Augustin says de civ. Dei, l. 22, c. 24, that they are transient comforts of miseries, not objects of enjoyment.

This contempt of the world is compatible with the most affluent temporal fortune, or the highest worldly honours; although in them greater watchfulness and care is requisite to preserve the heart from being tainted by them. Hence the holy Esther says of her imperial crown, (c. xiv.) "Thou knowest my necessity, and that I detest in my heart the sign of my glory, which is upon my head." And our countryman, the great Alcuin, preceptor of the emperor Charlemagne, writes thus to the bishop of Lyons: "Elipandus makes my riches and fortune a reproach, and objects against me the number of my servants and vassals, which is 20,000, not knowing that all depends on the heart. It is one thing to possess the world, and another to be possessed by the world. Some possess riches, but as free and disengaged in their souls as if they possessed them not. Others enjoy none, yet have them in their hearts."

St. Bernard observes, that this degree of being strangers and pilgrims on earth is the first in the contempt of the world, which so far is of precept to all. The second degree in this virtue is to be dead to the world. Of this the apostle says; (Col. iii. 3.) "For you are dead." One, that despises the world, may yet be sensible to its losses and pleasures; but he, that is dead to it, is insensible under them. His heart is so absorbed in God and heaven, that he feels not successes or disappointments, applause or contempt in earthly affairs; so sovereignly does he undervalue them. All things seem equal to him; so totally is he buried in his God, and so intent on him and the seeking only of his most holy will. In these dispositions, St. Francis of Sales exclaimed; (B. 4, ep. 13.) "I would not give one glance of the eye for the whole world. I despise it from the bottom of my heart. I will have nothing but purely for the greater honour and glory of God." And St. Basil thus describes the servant of God, (Admon. ad filium spirit.) "Burning with the love of God, and always having heaven in view, he tramples both on the pleasures and frowns of this world. Perpetually going forward towards God, desiring to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, all his conversation is in heaven, and he converses amongst men rather as a painted figure." It is a vulgar but strong simile of our pious countryman, Father Hilton, that such a person finds no more pleasure in the delights of the world than in knawing a dry stick.

The last degree in this virtue is to be crucified to the world. This expresses more than being dead to it; for it looks upon its honours, applause, riches, and pleasures with a loathing and horror. This was the sentiment of St. Paul, (Gal. vi. 14.) "By whom the world was crucified to me, and I to the world." Two things crucified to one another must be opposites, and and have their backs turned mutually to each other; or rather this means, that they must be a torture and abhorrence to one another, as the cross is to one hanging upon it. Hence St. Bernard says, (Serm. 17, in Quadr.) "I am dead to other things but those things, which belong to Christ, find me quick, alive, and ready. All the things, which the world loves, are a cross to me; bodily pleasure, honours, riches, vain praise. But what the world looks upon as crosses, to these I am fixed; to these I cleave close."

It is a precept to christians, who live in the world, that they do not love

it, or those things that are in it. "Be not conformed to this world." Rom. xii. 2. But how is it possible to touch pitch, and not be defiled by it? to breathe a contagious air, and not draw in its infection? to live in the midst of flames, and not burn? This is very possible through God, who furnishes us with arms and antidotes for our defence and preservation, if we are careful to make use of them.

The first preservative is, that no young persons enter the world, or engage in any state of life in it, till they have by prayer, meditation, and pious reading instructed themselves in its more dangerous rencontres and snares, in its company, diversions, public places, &c., and diligently filled their minds with a dread of them, a firm resolution of shunning and being always armed against them, and with the holy sentiments of the gospel opposite to the corruption, that reigns in it. These truths must be so long and seriously pondered, that they may have made deep and lasting impressions on the heart, which can make it impregnable to the maxims and example of the world. Penetrated with a great dread and idea of its dangers and evils, and armed with a steady resolution of being always firm and watchful against them, going into it, they must bear in mind the advice of Jeremiah to the Jews going captives to Babylon; "Now you shall see in Babylon gods of gold and silver, and wood and stone. Seeing the multitude before and behind adoring them, say in your hearts; Thee alone must we adore, O Lord." Bar. vi. 5. Thus meeting dangers, they must fervently renew in their hearts their resolutions, and the remembrance of the fidelity, which they owe to God against the world.

How contrary to this is the disposition, in which most persons enter the world! They go into it without precaution, fear, or apprehension. Blind, weak, and without experience as they are of its snares, they think themselves wise and strong enough to resist any evil, and wanting neither light to discover it, nor force to overcome it; nay, what is far more fatal, they go with the desire to court and invite its flattering charms, and to indulge themselves in its delights to the edge of the precipice, as if able then to discern it, and stop the fall. They go with pleasure and inclination as into the country of their promised happiness and liberty; they go with hearts open, and even greedy to suck in its poison. Such persons are a willing and sure prey to it, as the only preservative against it is a true knowledge of its dangers, and a saving fear and distrust, which will always keep the heart timerous, watchful, and shut against them.

But the preparation alone cannot suffice. A general, marching into an enemy's country, not only provides himself with the means to enter it safely, but also takes his measures how to secure himself through it, by shunning the more dangerous places, watching to discover all secret ambuscades, and preserving every where a communication for fresh supplies and daily provisions. Also, men going into a city infected with the plague, to secure themselves by a counter-poison, do not content themselves with using it when they first go in, but daily and continually renew the use of it, to fortify their bodies afresh against the pestilential vapour. So in the world meditation must be daily and continual, and always so much the more fervent and frequent as we oftener hear the voice of the devil, or handle his baits. We must never cease imploring the divine light and succours by assiduous prayer, and nourishing in our hearts a just hatred and fear of the world, and a contempt of its grandeur, riches, pomp, and pleasures, by con-

sidering their impiety, dangers, and vanity, and also the life and spirit of Christ, his opposition to and maledictions upon the world. To lose his idea of it would be to certainly perish by it.

It will be a powerful help, if we often reflect what idea we shall have of things at the hour of death, and conceive the same at present. Ah! what will then be our sentiments? If we have ever seen a friend in the last moments, we might have observed, that riches, reputation, honour, or power, how fond soever he may have formerly been of them, then lost all their influence upon his heart, and appeared to him like dust in the balance, without weight, and without consideration. Only what relates to eternity and virtue, seemed to him to deserve any real attention. Then things will appear to us in their true light; labours for virtue as nothing in comparison to the prize; the enjoyments of the world as nothing but smoke and emptiness. Dom. Austin, a pious monk at la Trappe, cried out at the point of death: "Now I understand how God's elect will be transported with joy at the judgment seat of Christ, when they shall clearly see by what nothings they were made eternally happy."

We must occupy our hearts much on God, and on spiritual things. If our thoughts are employed always on the earth, our affections will become clogged with it. But if we fix the eye of our soul on heaven, we shall raise our affections thither, and forget, despise, and hate this world. If a stranger goes into a dungeon, the gaoler burns in it frankincense or some scented berries, to preserve him from the disagreeable smell of the place, and from the infection of the close air putrified by the prisoner's breath, and carrying the contagion of the gaol-fever. So our hearts must burn with frequent aspirations to God, to be preserved by his sweetness from the stench and contagion of the world.

Virtue is courteous to all, yet shuns the dissipation caused by too great hurry and converse with men. It studies indeed to be all to all, and to conform itself to the innocent dispositions and discourse of others, as the angel did, who conducted young Tobit in a human shape; but like him it uses an invisible armour, raising its affections frequently to God amidst its worldly conversation and employs. And, though humane and obliging to every one, it shuns with all possible care the company of those, whose discourse or behaviour is notoriously vicious and worldly; for through such company even a saint would imperceptibly imbibe the maxims and spirit of the world.

Patience and joy under tribulations, and voluntary mortifications, are a great means to draw our hearts from the world. "When mothers would wean their children," says St. Augustin, (Serm. 311, t. 5, p. 1255,) "they anoint their breasts with aloes, that the babe, offended by the bitterness, may seek the breasts no more. God, in his mercy towards you, has, for this purpose, filled the world with bitterness; yet you love it still." His sweet providence sows all our roads with thorns, and surrounds us with misfortunes and crosses, all to wean us from a dangerous criminal world. We must then joyfully make this use of them.

If we are careful by these means to arm ourselves against the charms of the world, God will conduct us safe through its waves, as he did the Hebrews through the Red Sea, without so much as their clothes being wet; he will preserve us in the almost universal deluge, as he did Noe in the general flood; he will protect us untouched in the midst of flames, as he did the three children in the furnace.

DISCOURSE XLII.

ON TEMPTATIONS.

1. It is the important advice of the Wise man, to be deeply engraved in the heart of every one, especially of those, who first consecrate themselves seriously to the service of God; "Son, coming to the service of God, stand in justice and truth, and prepare thy soul to temptation." Eccl. xi. 1. As Pharaoh persecuted the Israelites, so does the devil the servants of God, to draw them back to his slavery; but with this difference, that, whereas his prototype only pursued them to the sea, he never desists in his war against them to the end of their lives. But he assaults more vigorously those, who are young in the service of God, and who have but lately freed themselves from his tyranny. It was to teach us this, and to instruct us how we ought to arm ourselves against temptation, that the first circumstance of Jesus' active life was his temptation. He would be led by the Holy Ghost into the desart, that he might be tempted by the devil. We are astonished and filled with horror to see, that the devil should have the insolence to assault him, whose sanctity and unattainted virtue he could not have been but a witness of; that the evidence of his divinity should be concealed from him; and that he should be permitted to approach, to tempt, even to carry in the air him, who was the co-eternal Son of God, and true God, clothed with human nature. But he, who was pleased to suffer himself for us to be reviled, scourged, and crucified by the members of the devil, would also permit himself to be tempted by the devil, that his conflict, victory, and crown might serve for our example, instruction, and triumph.

2. Though we are soldiers, such is our sloth, that we neglect to prepare ourselves for our most important and dangerous warfare. We wish to conquer, yet do not put ourselves in a condition to fight. Jesus, before he was tempted or entered on his public life amongst men, retired into a lonesome wilderness to prepare himself for the combat by solitude, prayer, and mortification, though he stood not in need of those arms for himself, as he was invulnerable; but he would correct our supine rashness and teach us what we are bound to do; for each of these means is an indispensable precaution for us; yet we neglect them. Instead of shunning the world and its dangers, we often seek them by the dissipation of our heart in worldly conversation, and the liberty we allow to our senses. We are slothful in persevering in fervent prayer for strength and protection; and study not sufficiently to weaken our enemies, both by exterior and interior mortification. What wonder, that we are so easily vanquished? Let us condemn our past base sloth, and pray that the Holy Ghost will also lead us into the desart of solitude, and inspire us with a love of prayer and penance, by which we may be made invincible against the tempting spirit. We must prevent his attacks by being always ready and armed. "Apply a remedy before the disorder." Eccl. xviii. 21.

3. Christ suffered from the devil a triple temptation to the three principal sins, by which men are seduced, viz. of gluttony or sensuality, of vain glory, and of ambition and pride; yet so that the prince of pride intermixed in each that vice. In the first, the tempter takes occasion from

our Saviour's fast and hunger, and artfully conceals his bait under an appearance of good and of necessity. Thus the spirit of darkness first assails pious souls. He does not, at first, propose any great evil, but something, in which he can gild over the danger or the malice. This is the snare; but under it he has more fatal views; he knows how impossible it is to ruin a virtuous soul all at once, but that, if he can unwarily draw her from her duty in a small thing, and strip her of her arms, she will afterwards be easily made his prey. Alas! some party of pleasure, a certain company, an affection for a person, seems in the beginning only natural or even virtuous, or a necessary part of decency; but, if we take the fair bait, we shall soon find this affection changing into a blazing furious passion. How many good souls have thus perished, because they did not see or suspect the first snare? The devil tempts to gluttony in different ways. To the voluptuous he promises the pleasure of sensuality; the needy he solicits to injustices; the virtuous he attacks under some pretence of piety, as he seduced the prophet into a transgression by a pretended revelation. 3 Kings xiii. Thus he attempts to persuade Christ to break his fast by a miracle. "If thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread." Mat. iv. 3. The suggestion is very subtle. A miracle might be lawful, but not when superfluous or demanded only for vanity. To break so long a fast might seem just and necessary; but not in the manner proposed, or by yielding to hunger out of gluttony. Christ, by humility, discovers and defeats the fiend's artifice, expressing a confidence in God's providence, and leaving to him the manner, by which he should be fed, refusing to be hasty in satisfying hunger, or to work a miracle for so unnecessary an end, and which could not be required for his Father's honour. "It is written," said he, "not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Mat. iv. 4. He could not be drawn, either by the crafty art of Satan, or by the pain of hunger, which he made use of to tempt him by, to lay aside that indifference, with which he regarded his body, or to cease from the steady contemplation of the divine word, which is our spiritual necessary food, and which had been his only nourishment in the desart. And he defeated the suggestion of necessity; though we make imaginary necessities of place, company, complaisance, &c. serve for excuses, which we ourselves could never allege, if not blinded by passion.

4. The devil seeing Christ impregnable to every assault from the necessities of the body or the senses, turns his battery, and attacks him with spiritual temptation of vain glory and pride. Here, to be better disguised, he transforms himself into an angel of light, and tempts him to ostentation under a miracle, under pretence of giving a proof of his divine mission. As the Holy Ghost had led Christ into the desart to decline applause and dissipation, the evil spirit carries him into public, and in the midst of Jerusalem places him upon the pinnacle, i. e. the highest flat roof or battlement of the temple, a place of very great height as well as of unparalleled stateliness and magnificence. Here he solicits him to perform a glorious miracle in public, as he had refused to work one in private, saying to him; "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written; That he hath given his angels charge over thee: in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest perhaps thou shouldst hurt thy foot against a stone." He reminds him of the singular protection promised by God to all his servants, particularly to his Son, the Messias, doubting if Jesus

was he; and proposes to him a thing, which does not seem criminal, and was covered with an appearance of good, hereby to draw him from the designs of grace, and secretly also to engage him to a titillation of vanity in such a glorious action. But humility easily discerns the spirit of vanity. "Where humility is there also is wisdom." Prov. xi. 2. Pride is always caught; it is easily deceived and easily deceives itself. The tempter often solicits us to evil under a cloak of virtue. He often persuades us, that pusillanimity is humility; that weakness or human respect is charity or christian condescension. We mistake the falsehood for the truth, and embrace the illusion, unless by humility, prayer, and mortification we obtain from God the light, that opens our eyes, and scatters the mist. Christ had so far humbled himself as to permit himself to be carried by the devil. He came to save the world not by glory, applause, and outward greatness; but by humiliations and the cross, a remedy suitable to our wound, which is pride. He therefore, rejects the seducer; adding, that it is forbidden to tempt God by asking a superfluous miracle. Thus he remained steady in his resignation and submission to the will of his Father, and to his holy choice of the plan and means for the manifestation of his glory, which were by the humiliations of his Son. As humility is also our only path to heaven, we must look upon and sincerely shun all grandeur as dangerous to us, under whatever colours it may be represented. Leaning towards humiliations as much as possible in all our deliberations, we shall secure ourselves against the illusions of the devil, and the dangers of subtle refined pride.

5. The devil finding himself baffled in all his stratagems, and not able to draw Christ, whose sanctity had alarmed him, into the least snare, nor even to make him discover, before his time, who he was, threw off the mask and betook himself to open force. Treating him no longer as the Son of God, he assaulted him with the most bare-faced and alluring double temptation of covetousness and pride. For he took him upon a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, represented to his imagination, and said to him: "All these will I give thee if falling down thou wilt adore me." A false promise, and what the devil had not in his power to give. But he is the father of lies, and only seeks to deceive when he tempts. If he can but extort consent, he then treats with scorn the poor deluded sinner, instead of giving him what he flattered him with; and the unhappy wretch finds, that he was cheated by empty dreams. Ah! the devil is often adored for one foot of land, or even less. Justice, duty, charity, religion, are all sold for a petty temporal interest, or an empty bubble of honour. Were he to put in the scales all the kingdoms of the earth, as he said to Christ, we should regard it as nothing in the balance against virtue. The devil repeats to men this unhappy word, "I will give you;" he displays before their eyes the enchanting object; and of what? of the most paltry pleasure, the basest satisfaction, the most vain applause of sinners, or of worldly pomp; and by this he daily destroys millions of souls. This is the net, in which he draws the greater part of mankind. To escape it, we must learn from Jesus instantly and courageously to reject the enemy, remembering our allegiance to our God, and saying with abhorrence: "Begone, Satan; for it is written: "The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and him only shalt thou serve." Mat. iv. 10.

6. The example of Jesus shows, that a resolute speedy resistance in the very beginning of a temptation puts the enemy to flight. If we deliber-

ate, dispute with him, and with Eve look on the gilded bait, by these delays we offend God, and give the tempter such an advantage, that we are sure to fall a prey. If we stop to listen to the charms of the syren's voice, we shall certainly be enchanted by it. We have only one means to secure ourselves, which is to shut our ears against it.

We are enlisted soldiers under Christ, but have been slothful and cowardly in his battles. We are to learn from our captain how we must fight. First, in what manner we are to prepare and arm ourselves for this warfare, by exercising ourselves under his victorious banner, by fasting, retreat, and prayer, studying our adversary's wiles, in meditation, and fortifying ourselves by daily succours from above. Secondly, with what vigour and resolution we must resist the very first appearance of the enemy. If we give him the least leisure to form his attacks, our passions within our own walls take heart, fall into an intelligence with him, and surely betray us into his hands. Christ was exempt from concupiscence. Temptations to him could only sound in his ears, and were not able to make any impression, either voluntary or involuntary, on his soul. With us, the case stands quite otherwise. A fund of corruption in our own hearts greedily catches the flame from the presence of the object. Jesus would banish the approaches, without reasoning with, or stopping to refute the enemy, to show us how quick and resolute our resistance must always be. Thirdly, we must not lose courage or be disturbed, if we are assailed with the most humbling and most foul temptations. The devil would reap the advantage of having disturbed our peace, besides whatever he might thence gain further against us.

Satan, vanquished and confounded, left Christ; and behold angels came and ministered to him. It sometimes happens, that the violence of our temptation is owing to ourselves. They diminish in proportion as they are overcome, and grace is increased and strengthened in our souls, which by its resolute complete victories daily acquires new spiritual forces. This augmentation of grace, the joy of our triumph and good conscience, the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and the congratulations of the heavenly spirits, are some of the immediate fruits of our happy victory. But we must not think ourselves secure, or cease to watch and arm ourselves daily with fresh fervour against the return of our implacable enemy, with whom we can never have any truce. Whence St. Luke says, vi. 13, of Christ: "All his temptations being ended, the devil departed from him for a time."

"Christ was tempted, that the christian might not be overcome by the tempter," as St. Augustin says, Serm. 2, in Ps. 90, n. 1. "He would leave us an example of all virtues, and of our whole conversation; therefore, immediately after his baptism, he is taken up to fight against the devil, that, having himself overcome him, he might deliver him to be trampled upon by his disciples," as St. Jerom observes, (ep. 97, ad Demetriad.) "Thus was he truly for us tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin." Heb. iv. 15.

7. Christ was tempted; and we must also be tempted. This life is a continual temptation. "The life of man is a warfare upon earth." Job viii. 1. Almighty God left some enemies among his people in the land of Canaan for their exercise. "I will not extirpate the nations which Josue left, that I may try Israel in them," says he, Jud. xi. 22. In like manner, though he can tempt no man, yet he suffers our spiritual enemies to tempt us; but this for our own spiritual advantage, and the greater

manifestation of his grace and mercy. For God is magnified and honoured exceedingly by our constant fidelity, and by the triumphs, which he works in us, his weak instruments, over his and our own enemies.

Manifold also and exceedingly great are the advantages we reap from these our victories. Heaven is offered to us only as their prize and recompence. Temptations or conflicts are the necessary condition, and our immortal crowns will be immensely multiplied in proportion to our victories. "He shall not be crowned unless he shall have fought lawfully." 2 Tim. ii. 5. No one can share in the triumph of the saints, who has not deserved the title of conquerer of the devil, the world, and the flesh. "He, that shall overcome, shall possess these things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Apoc. xxi. 7. "To him, that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God." Apoc. ii. 7. It is only from this that heaven is called a crown, and it is said of the blessed: "These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night." Apoc. vii, 14, 15. How were the apostles, the martyrs, the holy virgins, and all the saints crowned but by trials and temptations?

8. God also tries the fidelity of his servants. Thus he says of Abraham, after he had given the proof of his obedience by his readiness to sacrifice his son: "Now I have known that thou fearest God." Gen. xxii. 12. As God, he knew the fidelity of his servant before, but would have a proof given of it. For the same end, he gave the devil leave to try holy Job and Tobias. Tob. ii. 12. By temptation we likewise learn to know ourselves, and confess our own weakness and dependance on God. In prosperity we are apt to say: "We shall not be moved for ever." Ps. xxix. 7. "He, who is not tempted, knows not what he is." Eccl. xxxiv. 9. For which reason, it was necessary and advantageous to the great St. Paul, amidst his sublime graces, to feel the buffet of the angel of Satan in the sting of his flesh. 2 Cor. xii. 7. Temptation, moreover, preserves from pride, self-sufficiency, rash confidence, and all sin and sloth; satisfies for sin, purifies the soul, enlightens the understanding, inflames the will, inspires fervour, watchfulness, divine love, and other virtues; and increases in a soul all spiritual stores and riches. "Truly the Lord will make increase with temptation." 1 Cor. x. 13.

It is then permitted for our good; but we must not hence infer, either that God can ever tempt us, or that we can lawfully seek temptations, which would always be a most criminal presumption. We must have patience and courage under them, but are bound to imitate a prudent general, who declines giving battle, unless he be obliged to do so, to gain the just object of the war. We are bound even to pray against, and shun, when possible, all dangerous temptations; and, above all things, to tremble, lest we draw them upon ourselves as a just punishment of our sloth or sins.

Gerson sums up six principal present advantages, which accrue to us from temptations, viz. 1. That we remember by them our own frailty. 2. That we be made sensible how necessary the divine succour is to us. 3. That it may appear whether we truly love God. 4. That we may correct other vices, which before the temptation we took little notice of.

5. That we may satisfy for our offences. 6. That we may not be puffed up with the gifts of God, or forget ourselves.

9. Though our just and loving God can permit us to be tempted either in punishment of our tepidity and sins, or in mercy for our spiritual advantage, yet it would be the most horrible blasphemy, the most monstrous error, to affirm that God could be the author of any sin, as Florinus, the arch-heretic, refuted by St. Irenæus, seems to have affirmed; or that he can impel any one to sin,[a] or tempt any one to it. He is infinite sanctity, and the God hating all iniquity, infinitely perfect, and capable only of what is good, but not of any evil or imperfection, which is sovereignly repugnant to his very essence. Having formed creatures capable of swerving from the holy rule of justice, and endowed with free will, he permits them, through their own malice, to become parents of that monster, moral evil; yet this permission is holy in him, and it serves his infinite wisdom to draw good even from that evil, which, by its opposition, sets off his goodness, and illustrates in the most wonderful manner his justice in punishing sinners, his mercy in redeeming and pardoning them; and displays all his attributes, as shades show the beauties of a painting; and as, without knowing darkness, we should not be sensible of the benefit of light. But if we know not all the reasons, for which he suffers evil, it is our duty to adore his infinite wisdom and sanctity, not sacrilegiously and blasphemously to arraign his goodness, because his ways are unsearchable to us, and above our understanding in this our present state of darkness. We must then confess, that sin is purely our own dire voluntary offspring, and a monster hateful to God, who cannot any ways draw to it or concur in it. If it be sometimes ascribed to him as a punishment of hardened malice, it can proceed no otherwise from him than through his just permission. "Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils, and he tempteth no man." James i. 14, 15.

Having created heaven for his creatures happiness, he was pleased to bestow it as a prize and recompence of their victories, and as a reward of their fidelity. Hence he placed the angels and our first parents, on their creation, in a state of trial for a time; and, though he has restored us to his grace by a plentiful redemption, he yet leaves us subject to many weaknesses, and exposed to dangerous conflicts; but then he has put such arms into our hands, and strengthens us with such graces, that we have it in our power to be surely triumphant under his protection and succours. Thus he has appointed for our good, that we should obtain heaven as a crown of our fidelity and love of him, and by giving proofs thereof; as if a king, desiring to raise a subject to the greatest honours, should commit to him some important expedition, for which he should take care so well to furnish and equip him, that by public proofs of his conduct and capacity, and by his faithful services, he might show himself worthy of the rank he intended to raise him to. "You are regenerated unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you; who by the power of God are kept by faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations; that the trial of your faith,

[a] The expressions and doctrine of the rigid Calvinists on this point cannot be justified; not even Chamerus, when he endeavours to mollify them, and exculpate his master. See Calvin's works, t. 3, p. 71.

much more precious than gold which is tried by the fire, may be found unto praise, and glory, and honour." 1 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7.

10. To tempt sometimes signifies to try another. Thus God is said to have tempted or tried Abraham. In another sense, man is said to tempt God, if he rashly presume and expect a superfluous miracle from him. But, as it is here meant, temptation is a solicitation or motion to draw a a soul to sin. In temptation we are to distinguish, with St. Gregory, three things: the suggestion, the declaration, and the consent. The suggestion, it is plain, is no sin, if it be no ways voluntary. If a governor of a city receive a letter soliciting him to betray his master, and deliver up his fortress to the enemy, he is guilty of no treason, but performs the part of a true heroically loyal subject, if he gave no wilful occasion to such a base solicitation, and no sooner perceived the contents, than he abhorred the proposal, and with indignation tore and threw the letter into the fire. But this suggestion becomes criminal, if it be wilfully entertained, or even if it be not rejected immediately with due horror.

This suggestion may excite an indeliberate and involuntary delight, which is the second degree in the temptation, and is without guilt, if the will, without delay, vigorously and sincerely resists, suppresses, and detests it. To feel it is indeed a great misery, very dangerous to the heart, and a subject of fear, tears, and humiliation to the faithful soul: but it ought by no means to disturb or discourage her. For, as St. Austin says, (l. de vera relig. c. 14,) sin is so wilful an evil that it is no ways a sin, if it be no way wilful. Under this feeling of pleasure from a criminal object, the will must be most strenuous and earnest, as it is a bewitching charm; but if the will has any way directly or indirectly procured it, or is pleased with it, the guilt of the crime is contracted.

The third degree then in temptation is the consent, and by this the sin is perpetrated. The will may consent to a suggestion or action either directly and in itself, or indirectly only and in the cause, in which it is contained, or from which it might probably follow. One, who is accustomed to quarrel or curse, &c. in liquor, if he get drunk, consents to the sin of drunkenness directly; and as he ought to foresee that quarrels, blasphemies, &c. may probably follow from it, knowing himself subject to them on such an occasion, they are voluntarily indirectly, and their guilt imputed to him, though perhaps, he did not really commit them, or, if he did, it was without any knowledge of what he was doing. Such a one must in his confession declare not only that he was drunk; but that he is subject to quarrels, &c. when in that state, and must express what really happened in it. An effect is voluntary in its cause, when it could and ought to have been foreseen as what might probably follow from it, and that cause could and ought on that account to have been avoided. Thus he, who throws a stone over a wall into a public place or road, where it might hurt or kill some body, in case of the effect would be guilty of murder both before God and men; and, even if no person be actually hit, he commits a sin before God by applying the cause. This second sort of consent suffices to constitute sin, though, as it is less complete, the malice is not equally enormous. This makes up a great part of those sins of ignorance in ourselves or others, which, without great watchfulness over ourselves, we shall seldom take notice of, and which are however imputed to us, as owing to our faults. For these the saints always lived in fear and trembling, and prayed continually with the royal prophet in the spirit of

compunction for them. As for the affected ignorance of those, who refuse to learn evil, that they may not be obliged to shun it, saying to God: "We will not the knowledge of thy ways;" Job xxi., this, far from extenuating, rather increases and aggravates their malice, as St. Thomas observes.

As for an invincible or inculpable ignorance, whether of the action being unlawful, or of it being committed by us, as under it the sin is not voluntary, it can be no longer a sin. Thus, if a man, by invincible ignorance, should think it lawful and consequently of precept, to tell a harmless lie to save another's life; or if one should shoot a man, after having taken all due care to examine, and inculpably thinking the object to be a wild beast; he would not sin. But, with regard to the great and essential duties enjoined by the eternal law of God, it is almost impossible to determine, in what cases ignorance can be really invincible, so as to excuse from the violation of them. Also inadvertance, or a privation of actual attention, if it be truly invincible, excuses from sin; e. g. if one after having begun with his utmost endeavours to break a habit of swearing, should, notwithstanding his care and watchfulness, invincibly, without reflection, and as it were mechanically, repeat a rash oath; or if one, who had carefully examined all the fasting days, should as yet inculpably forget one, &c. Not that to sin it is necessary actually to have some present idea of the malice of the action; it suffices if a person could and ought to have attended to it, had not sloth, indifference, &c. been the criminal hindrance.

There is also what is called an interpretative consent, when the will neither embraces nor rejects the suggestion; and this, not that it may die away more easily, but dwelling upon it, or hovering as it were about it. This consent suffices to constitute a mortal sin, were it only on account of the immediate danger of a further consent; thus it is a degree of infidelity in a spouse to stay listening to a wicked suggestion. The will advances to a higher degree in the crime, if it really doubt whether or no to consent to it.

Any of these degrees of consent may suffice for some degree of a mortal sin, yet may be given in the shortest moment, as nothing is more quick than the motions of the soul, especially when actuated by the wheel of passion. It is therefore her principal and most important duty to watch over and guard firmly the fortress of her will. Though the enemy may have seized all her avenues, may have filled her imagination, her mind, and her senses, with his foul images, still she preserves her innocence, and can have nothing to fear.

DISCOURSE XLIII.

ON THE MEANS OF OVERCOMING TEMPTATIONS.

1. To prepare ourselves for our spiritual warfare we must consider the kind of enemies we have to arm against. These are the devil, the world, and our own flesh. As to the first, we learn his implacable hatred and boundless malice against man from the fury, with which he attacked and

overcame our first parents in paradise; from which time he is our declared enemy in the service of God. "I will put enmity," says God to him on that occasion, "between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." Gen. iii. 15. Hence he reduces his whole time to this one employ of tempting us, and exerts in it all his power. His attention or his time are not divided by different occupations. He studies in all places and at all times to lie in ambuscade, or to make open assaults upon us to make us his prey. He follows us, he observes us, he besieges us every where. To judge of his strength, we must remember what he has done with the utmost ease, and, as it were, in play, when God did not restrain his power; and that he would do much more, if not withheld by that omnipotent arm. He hurled the swine into the lake, and filled the whole province with fear; he has slain armies in one night; killed the seven first husbands of Sarah; often disturbs nature, and has power to stir up storms and tempests, which ravage the world; and what did he not effect in holy Job?

We shall still more dread his craft, if we consider the almost infinite subtility of his spiritual nature, and his long experience, now of some thousands of years, in destroying souls. He knows what baits are most attractive in every vice, and what passions every man is most prone to; he discovers the secret bent of each heart, studies its weakest side, and seeks the place and time when it is most unguarded and open. Thus always, "as a roaring lion he goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. iv. 8. Better to succeed, he puts on all shapes; sometimes employing hidden snares, sometimes open violence. He often plays the serpent, lying concealed to sting without being discovered; he frequently even transforms himself into an angel of light, assuming the air of virtue, and again appearing in his own figure, making his attacks openly, and with the utmost fury and rage; whence he is sometimes stiled the old serpent, sometimes the lion and the noon-day devil, &c., but from his indefatigable industry, and, as it were, office of tempting men, he is called Satan or the enemy, and "the tempter, and he who tempts." Mat. vi. 31. Thess. iii. 5. In an army, an old crafty commander is more to be feared than many legions. To the malice, power, falsehood, and cunning of this our spiritual enemy, and to the wiles and deceits, to which this father of lies has ever recourse, we must add his insolence and pride, which dares every thing, and is swoln with daily unhappy victories over millions of souls. He, in his fall, drew the third part of the angels after him. He conquered Adam, although sheltered in paradise; Judas an apostle, and even then in the holy company of our blessed Saviour; Solomon, exalted above all other men in wisdom and the gifts of fortune, and also endowed with extraordinary favours of grace; and many, who had grown old in the practices of penance, and had often foiled him before, but who had the misfortune at last to lay aside their arms, by which they fell his prey. And he daily overturns cedars of sanctity in the church, besides dragging after him the unhappy bulk of mankind, an easy and almost willing prey to him. Elate with success, he goes forth as a conqueror to make conquests, Apoc. vi. 2, with such pride as to confide that Jordan itself may "go into his mouth, as he is described under the type of the monster Behemoth;" Job. xl. 18, i. e. according to St. Gregory, that he may swallow up the whole race of Adam. Such indeed is his empire in the world, that he is called the prince thereof, and the ruler of these darknesses.

This is the formidable enemy, against whom we are to maintain our ground. "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places." Eph. vi. 12. The devils are said to be in the high places, because they fill this lower air with their multitudes, though probably carrying their l ell about with them, as well as those who are already confined in their inferior dungeons, as Lucifer himself is represented now to be. Apoc. xx. 2. Those, who still are permitted to hover here, are described in the sacred books as constituting a great army, under a prince and leader, and seducing souls by myriads. "That old serpent who is called the devil, and Satan who seduceth the whole world." Apoc. xii. 9. And if we could be at peace with all other enemies, we can have no truce with this one.[a]

2. Our baptismal renunciations, and the repeated severe admonitions of our divine master, teach us, that the world is a second enemy, against whose furious assaults we are to maintain ourselves. It tempts us, by offering on every side its alluring objects of vanity and sensuality to ensnare our hearts. Every thing in it is gilded over with some false gloss to excite in our hearts some inordinate passion, unless we are careful continually to bridle and restrain our affections, our desires, and our fears. "The creatures of God are converted to his hatred against him, and to temptation to the souls of men, and into a trap for the feet of the fools." Wisdom, xiv. 11. "Which way soever we go forth, there are many snares," says St. Ambrose, l. 4, in Luc. n. 10. "We must fear, even in undertakings for virtue, a snare in embracing a state of chastity and perfection."

If inanimate objects in the world are full of snares to virtue, mankind presents greater, and far more dangerous and frequent. The contagion of their discourses, gestures, and example sets such strong and imperceptible ones, that an extraordinary caution, watchfulness, and light are necessary to discern them, and a superior courage to shun or break them. Add, frequently violence and open persecution; an human respect and awe, or a fear of the censures or frowns of others; and, above all, the enchanting and almost irresistible power of secret seductions, which conceal their danger, and draw us into the gulph by steps, which appear at first innocent, nay virtuous or necessary. The great Solomon conversed with, then loved, next married strange women; and, in a short time, out of complaisance, was seduced by them into idolatry.

3. But the most pernicious and troublesome snare of temptations is that concupiscence, which we carry within our own bosom; which, through the channels of our senses, holds a constant intelligence with our exterior enemies. We have in us a fund of sloth, that exposes us to all spiritual dangers and sin. We have a weakness both in the irascible power of our souls, and in the concupiscible; by which, in the former, fervour, zeal, or eagerness degenerate from objects of virtue, or from an honest self-defence, or from the just manner of pursuing them, and give us a natural bent to pride, anger, envy, &c., and in the latter, our desires of good are inclined to fix upon the false apparent pleasures of sin, or to seek too eagerly, and in an inordinate manner, the gratification of appetites, which, otherwise,

[a] Ecce fiant omnes christiani, numquid & diabolus christianus erit? St. Aug. in Ps. lxix. n. 2.

are in themselves regular and lawful. If we reduce these sources of weakness to one fund of vicious passions or inclinations, and call it concupiscence, we may define it a tendency to an inordinate love of ourselves. But concupiscence most properly signifies the latter of these weaknesses, or an inordinate appetite of sensual pleasure.

The appetites, conformable to the objects of our senses, are in themselves good and laudable, a perfection of our nature, an instinct necessary to make man seek many things necessary to preserve his being. They were bestowed on Adam in his happy state of original integrity in paradise, when the will was of itself disposed readily to obey the commands of reason, and to be perfectly subject to the holy law of God. But by his sin they became rebellious, and formed obstacles to the prosecution of virtue; and human nature conceived an inclination to an inordinate desire of its own excellence, and to refer all things and all its pursuits to itself; while the sensitive part was so far from obeying reason without reluctance, that it strove to shake off its yoke, and often excites motions in the mind or in the body, which the will has no share in, nay disowns, contradicts, condemns, and is ashamed of; and it moreover inclines, as it were, or weighs down the will, to engage it to consent to its irregular cupidities. Thus man, the great and noble living image of God, feels in himself those base and furious motions of concupiscence, the like to which even no brute ever suffers; a mystery, that seemed to St. Augustin sufficient alone to prove original sin to have been its source. Christ, to whom we owe our immortal thanks for so inestimable a benefit, has rescued us from its power; but he still leaves it for the subject of our trials and victories, mercifully furnishing us with means and graces to subdue it. Its first involuntary and perfectly indeliberate motions are no ways sinful, as the will has no part in them; these are called by the Greeks propassions, not passions; by the Latin school-men, first motions.

4. This concupiscence is our third and most dangerous spiritual enemy. The others are exterior tempters, and they make their most violent assaults, chiefly by exciting this to rebel within ourselves. Unless it be stirred up against us, the most furious attempts of the devil and the world are only weak efforts acting outwardly on our senses or souls; hence they usually only lay baits to concupiscence. This then is the great instrument of the devil in seducing us. "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured. Then, when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." James i. 14, 15. And this is the tempter, which we have most reason to fear, because it is most furious, and at the same time a domestic and a treacherous enemy. Our flesh is, on one side, a friend, an inseparable companion, partner, and an assistant in virtue, which we are bound to feed and cherish. If we destroy it, we become self-murderers, and, if we do not subdue it by mortification, we are sure to become its prey. Alas! what shall I do, my God? How shall I overcome this body, at the same time both a friend and an enemy? How shall I tame that, which I received from nature to love? How shall I deliver myself from that, to which I am inseparably linked? How shall I appease that with reason, which listens to none, and which seeks to seduce me by a thousand deceitful lies? How shall I make my peace or truce with that, which never ceases to allure and lay snares for me, and against which I have sworn an irreconcileable war? How much soever I shall afflict it, I shall always find it resisting me. This St. Jerom expe-

rienced in his mortified body. This St. Paul, even amidst all his fatigues and labours, complained of. "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 23, 24.

5. These three implacable enemies never cease assaulting us, either by open attacks or secret stratagems. If we enjoy a seeming calm, we must not grow remiss, but be sure that an ambuscade is laid for us. Whence St. Augustin says, (Hom. 40, ex 50.) "Let the soldier of Christ be always armed, always solicitous and watching, more fearful even in peace than in war." Having continually three such restless, such furious, such crafty, and such strong enemies to encounter and guard against, can we indulge in sloth, and forget the war, in which we are engaged, and the dangers with which we are surrounded? Every moment of our lives we are exposed to receive a mortal wound; the twinkling of an eye suffices; it may be admitted through any one of our senses left unguarded. Yet upon the issue of this war depends an eternity of infinite misery or happiness. How must we tremble at this thought! If we miscarry, we are lost for ever.

6. In these straights what must we do? We must be penetrated with a deep humility, and an entire distrust in ourselves, place a firm confidence in God, have recourse to him by fervent prayer, and, with great solicitude, watch against all dangers. The first disposition for this spiritual war, is an humble diffidence in our own strength. Humility is necessary throughout the whole spiritual life; but no where more essentially than to make us victorious over our spiritual enemies. We are unable to withstand them ourselves, being weakness itself; all our support must be from God; and he who is the sovereign lover of truth, and the hater of all pride and self-sufficiency, will have us acknowledge this. He will never protect those, who are strong in their own conceit. In this sense, the beginning of all sin is pride. Even, in the state of innocence, Adam, free from concupiscence and all that weakness of the will, with regard to good, which we inherit from his sin, fell; because, confiding in his own strength, he neglected to call upon God. St. Peter fell by presuming on his resolutions, though seemingly the strongest possible. And this same presumption is the source of all sin. Can any thing be more just than that the weak puff not themselves up with a false insolent arrogance, and do not dare what is so much above their abilities, and highly injurious to the grace and essential right of God? "There is no help to me in myself." Job vi. 13.

7. Though we are weak, and of ourselves totally unequal to our spiritual warfare, it would be equally fatal and criminal to despond and lose courage, as to presume. No one can ever fight with bravery, whose spirits are sunk. The soldier must necessarily be a coward, who is not animated with cheerfulness and confidence. It is this, that gives vigour and earnestness to the soul. And what motives of confidence have we not in our spiritual combats, if we but look up towards God. He, who is almighty, has bound himself to fight in us and with us, if we but call upon him; he will cover us with his shield in the day of battle. Let the rage of our enemies be ever so terrible, God says to us as he did to St. Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. xiii. 9. Eliseus's servant was terrified, seeing himself and his master surrounded by the army of the Syrians; the prophet said to him; "Fear not, for more are with us than with them; and

the Lord opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; and behold the mountain filled with horses and fiery chariots." 4 Kings vi. 16, 17. God's angels are encamped around us, and he himself is with us, armed to conquer for us. What then can we fear, if we secure his protection to ourselves? "Place me by thee, and let the hand of whomsoever fight against me." Job xvii. 3. As for our enemies, they cannot approach us but by God's permission; and he restrains their power. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able." 1 Cor. x. 13. The devil is like a dog in a chain, says St. Austin, ol. Serm. 197, de temp. nunc app. Serm. 37. He can bite no one, who does not presumptuously put himself within his reach. Now see how foolish that man is, who suffers himself to be bit by a dog tied up by a chain. Do not approach near him by the pleasures of the world and the senses, and he will not be able to come at thee. He can bark, he can entice, but he cannot bite, except him that is willing to suffer him to do so. St. Anthony, in a discourse to his disciples, shows how weak and contemptible an enemy Satan is, as we are armed by Christ against him; for he was not able to hinder or stop his preaching against him, and trembled at prayer, watching, fasting, meekness, humility, and charity. What a subject of joy and confidence, to be assured of victory, if we are not wanting to God's protection? This humble diffidence in ourselves and confidence in God highly honours him, and engages him in our favour; for it gives all to him, as is our obligation, and is the testimony of a great love of him, and the strongest acknowledgment of his goodness as well as sovereignty. Hence, he says, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt honour me.

8. In these dispositions we must address ourselves to him by fervent prayer. By it Judith returned chaste and triumphant from the camp of Holofernes: Daniel was preserved in the ravening lion's den, and the children in the furnace: and it is by it that all the saints overcame the devil. Amaleck was his type, when he opposed the Jews in their passage out of Egypt into the land of promise, the type of heaven. "Whilst Josue fought, Moses went to the mountain to pray, and whilst he lifted up his hands, Israel overcame; but if he in the least let them fall, Amalec began to recover himself." Exod. xvii. 12. Our divine Redeemer was pleased to prepare himself for temptation by fasting and prayer, only to teach us that this must be our armour; and all the saints made it such, crying out with the royal prophet of God without ceasing; "Save me from all who persecute me, and deliver me; lest as a lion he carry away my soul, and there be no one to rescue it." Ps. vii. 2. "Enlighten my eyes, that I may never sleep in death: may my enemy never say, I have prevailed against him." Ps. xii. 3, 4. "In thee I shall be delivered from temptation, and in my God I shall pass over the wall." Ps. xvii. 30. "It is he who teaches my hands to battle." Ib. v. 35. "Unless the Lord shall keep the city, he watches in vain who keeps it." Ps. cxxvi. 1.

Our remote preparation against temptation must be, to pray always most earnestly to be delivered from its dangers. A person, armed and fenced by prayer, is terrible to the devil. "Believe me," says St. Anthony to his disciples, as St. Athanasius tells us in his life, "the devil fears extremely watchings, prayer, fasting, mildness, voluntary poverty, the contempt of vain-glory, humility, mercy, and above all a pure and burning love of Christ." And St. John Climacus says, Scal. p. 661. "As thieves do not easily rob in places that are fortified and guarded, so the devil, the spiri-

tual robber of our souls, can never plunder those, who have always prayer, their spiritual arms, as it were in their hands."

Prayer must be accompanied with the practice of all other good works and virtues, which will draw down the grace of God, and make our armour complete. "Put on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil." Eph. vi. 10. "Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect." v. 13. He then describes this complete armour, consisting of the meditation of the divine word, and a steady strong resolution of adhering to his truth by an inviolable fidelity; proof even against torments, death, and hell, "in all things taking the shield of truth, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the wicked one. By all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance;" ib. v. 17, 18. This then is the armour, with which we must be always girt ready to repel our enemies; though it is not our use of it that can defend us. By it, however, "we shall be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of his power." Ib. v. 10.

9. We must watch as well as pray, or we should be guilty of tempting God, and would be justly abandoned by God to perish in our presumption. This our blessed Redeemer presses upon us by so often inculcating that important advice to watch always. "Watch ye and pray, that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Mark xiv. 38. How strong soever our resolution and spirit may seem against sin, we are too weak to enter the lists with our enemy, unless God be with us. But this he never will be, if we rashly presume on ourselves, and challenge our enemies, when he does not call and lead us out to battle. We must then watch over ourselves, to prevent our enemies gaining any advantage against us. If we had but one enemy who made it his study to take away our life by violence, craft, or poison, should not we be always upon our guard to secure ourselves against him, both night and day, at home and abroad? Should we ever go out without considering and arming ourselves against all chances? The devils are always watching to surprise us; and if they spy one sense, one action, one moment unguarded, they are sure to seize on it. Our vigilance then must be perpetual and also universal. In vain does a governor guard the gates of his fortress, if he leave a breach or pass open in any other part. When men watch only on one side, the devil is sure to attack them on another, where he sees them less attentive and less upon their guard. He who watches only his words or actions, will be tempted and easily seduced by dangerous glances or by other little things, which will kindle sparks in his heart, the more dangerous as their beginning will be less observed. Nothing then must escape our vigilance; no sense, no action, no word or thought, no moment, no passion. All avenues must be guarded against pride, no less than against impurity or gluttony; that, whatsoever shape our enemy turns himself into, on which side soever he directs his attacks, he may every where find us in a condition to resist him. Above all, we must watch against our predominant passion, as it is by it the devil chiefly studies to assault us, and lays his most frequent and most dangerous stratagems as their concupiscence is strongest and we weakest and blindest; consequently the more easily betrayed into a snare, or deceived by crafty wiles. Scarcely an hour passes, in which some object does not strike one

or other of our senses, or intrude itself into our mind, which, if consented to, or if not instantly and vigorously repulsed, would give a mortal stab to our souls. What a necessity do we lie under of always being upon the watch over all our faculties, immediately to take the alarm in the time of danger? Even under the appearance of good we must fear a snare.[a]

But how far are men of the world from this universal watchfulness? They seem to live as if they had no enemies to fear, or as if they were no less secure of their salvation than the angels, and as free from passions and dangers. Or, if they watch against one vice, which perhaps is not their favourite object, they lay themselves open exposed to others equally or much more dangerous to them. They, who hate prodigality, do not sufficiently fear avarice. If some mortify their flesh, do they study also to die to their own wills? Or are these sufficiently guarded against pride, or the contrary? Do not many rest quietly in the bosom of pleasures, and in a life of sensuality? They seem totally employed in making one diversion succeed another, when the first grows stale or tiresome. Do not others apply all their attention to temporal affairs and earthly goods? Such persons, so far from watching over their inclinations and senses, court temptations and seek dangers, and are so blind as not to see them or many of their own falls. Temptation becomes a habit, and is not so much as perceived by them. Worldly conversation is not feared, but sought and entered into without the least precaution. Excess of sleep, sensuality in meals, perpetual diversions, softness and idleness are looked upon as privileges of an easy condition and fortune in the world, and not as snares to the soul. The poor think, that desires and murmurings are allowed in their circumstances. All descriptions of people act, in general, so as to strengthen concupiscence, instead of labouring to subdue that inexhausted source of temptations in their souls.

The continual practice of penance and mortification is another necessary part of armour against temptations. Interior penance, by repeated acts of compunction, must nourish perpetually a sovereign horror and dread of sin and all its occasions. We must continually beg of God a constant filial fear of sin, that we may be always on our guard against it, praying with St. Francis Xavier: "Permit me not, O Lord, to be separated from you; for this would be more dreadful to me than all the torments of hell."

Penance must also, by both interior and exterior mortification, contribute without ceasing to subdue the passions and the flesh; concupiscence may be weakened and kept under command; but it cannot be extinguished as long as we live in this mortal body; this source of temptations cannot be totally drained; this *fomes peccati* this weakness begotten from sin, and inclining to sin, cannot be perfectly rooted out, as long as we groan under the load of the flesh; but it can be always diminished and kept in subjection; we therefore lie under a necessity of continually crucifying it. "Quotidie minus potest, finiri non potest," says holy Bede, in Rom. viii. We must daily, by some self-denials, or by other means, restrain all our inward appetites, such as by contradicting our own will to follow that of another, or receiving joyfully those things, which contradict it, &c. We must likewise every day take something from our body, refuse something to our flesh and senses, that would flatter them: viz. to keep them

[a] Bonus nunquam, nisi boni simulatione, deceptus est. St. Bern. Serm. 66, in Cant.

low, and prevent their irregular motions and cravings, or at least teach them to obey. This is the means established by God, by which alone his victorious graces are offered to us ; this is the armour, with which we are to cover and strengthen ourselves, and by which alone we can be able to repel our adversaries. Christ himself taught us this by preparing himself for temptation by fasting. By it all the saints were holy martyrs of themselves, and innocent murderers of concupiscence ; an Anthony vanquished it by solitude, labours, and rigorous austerities ; a Benedict extinguished its heat in streams of his blood, throwing himself upon thick thorns ; a Francis, feeling it preparing to revolt, quelled it by rolling in the snow and ice. Many did so by standing in frozen waters ; St. Ammonius tore his flesh with hot iron hooks. Shall christians hope to overcome its assaults, who by studied self-love, by sleep, delicacies, and delights of their senses, bid their flesh fortify itself and take strength, to tempt and persecute them. Can they complain, that concupiscence burns in them, whilst they themselves set it on fire ? Can they sigh to God to be delivered in a storm, which they themselves have excited ? Can they be surprised to find themselves devoured by a worldly spirit, who seek in worldly company those objects, which solicit to sin, and that conversation, which gives impressions of pride, vanity, and ambition ? Such persons must mortify these passions by solitude, fasts, and watching. But these are remedies, which a worldly spirit cannot bear. It then must perish.

The being always employed in an earnest and serious manner is the most indispensable part of this penance. Sloth and idleness are the mother and source of all vices. Nothing can give the devil a more assured victory, which way soever he shall direct his batteries. We must be diligent in all duties and exercises, both temporal or of our calling, and spiritual or of religion. We must have frequent recourse to our spiritual director for his advice, as St. John Climacus observes, gr. 4. We must seek to wound the enemy with his own weapon, i. e. to advance in the opposite virtue ; e. g. in temptations of pride, to apply ourselves particularly to acts of humility. By these we remove ourselves from our enemy, and fight him with great advantage at a distance.

10. Under temptation, the grand precept is to resist with vigour the very first assault. To delay one moment, and much more by any softness in the will to suffer the dangerous impression to grow stronger, on one side weakens the heart extremely, and on the other fortifies the enemy, who from such an advantage becomes irresistible. "From one spark a fire is increased." Eccl. xi. 30. If the serpent get but his head in, he easily draws his whole body after it. As the fly, hovering about the candle, at last singes his wings and, being drawn into the flame by the attraction of its atmosphere, perishes therein ; so a soul, which startles not at the danger, is sure to fall into it. He, who plays with the bait, will be delighted and enchanted by it, and will certainly devour it in the end. Not to resist immediately is already to yield in some degree ; it is often what divines call an interpretative consent.

Upon the very first appearance of the enemy, we must most vigorously repel him, raising our hearts to God as our only support and protection, with as great earnestness as a man, who should suddenly find himself on the brink of perishing ; "Lord, save me, I perish. Divine Redeemer, most merciful Jesus, by thy adorable wounds, by thy precious blood and sacred death, preserve me from this devouring lion. Deliver me, and

place me by thyself. I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, whence succour will come to me."

The soul must, according to the circumstances, persevere in fervent prayer, or often, after an earnest short prayer, apply herself with the utmost seriousness to some employment of duty, charity, or labour, which will engross her whole attention, taking extreme care not in the least to favour the temptation by any thought, glance, motion of a hand, &c. but to keep our minds most oppositely busied, and our hands, eyes, and whole body in the most remote posture and place, that we conveniently can. Concupiscence is crafty and ingenious, seeking to gain at least some little secret advantage; but our watchfulness and resistance must be entire.

11. But our manner of resistance must be diversified. In some temptations we must resist by encountering them manfully, as in those of sloth, or of a disrelish of prayer and other exercises of piety. Here we must boldly look them in the face, and they will appear more easy to be conquered. We must redouble those exercises; sometimes proposing them to ourselves at first only for a certain time. The devil will at last betake himself to flight, when he finds so vigorous and early a resistance. Of these temptations, and those of pride and the like, we are most properly to understand that precept: "Resist the devil, and he will fly from you." James iv. 7. But let the assault of the enemy be ever so furious or obstinate, we must not suffer our resistance to grow remiss or slack, saying to ourselves: "You have not yet resisted to blood, fighting against sin." Heb. xii. 4.

On the contrary, in temptations of impurity, sensuality, or concupiscence we must indeed instantly and strenuouly reject the suggestion, and defend the fortress of our will and all our powers against the most furious attacks; but this must be done, not by meeting the enemy, but by flying from him. Here we must fly and fight; we must quit instantly the presence of the object, the company, place, or whatever else may favour the temptation. Concupiscence within us is more easily set on a flame than touch-wood by the contact of fire; hence the apostle's precept; "Fly fornication." 1 Cor. xii. 18. Whosoever fixes his eyes upon an object, with Eve on the beautiful apple, will certainly with her find his heart entangled by it.

12. God sometimes permits souls to be molested by vehement temptations of importunate thoughts, as against faith, of blasphemy or the like. Under such trials, which serve to purify our souls, and furnish us occasions of great merit and victories, we must reject the enemy calmly and peaceably by despising him; for too violent resistance in this case disturbs the mind, makes the devil's impressions stronger, and engraves them deeper. Scratching a sore envenoms it the more. The devil is here properly the prince of flies; when they are troublesome, the best method of driving them away is not to mind them; if a person endeavours to chase them with too much vehemence, they return the more. "If such temptations continue importunate," says St. Francis of Sales, "be not disturbed; the noise of leaves in trees is not the clashing of arms. Lately I was near a hive of bees, and some of them stopped on my face; I was putting my hand to drive them away, but a countryman standing by said to me; Fear not, do not touch them, and they will not hurt you. I did so; and not one of them bit or stung me. Believe me, touch not these, and they will not hurt you. God permits the cunning serpent to offer us his ware for sale, that by despising it we may have an opportunity of showing our fidelity to God."

St. Peter of Alcantara, in his treatise of the Peace of the Soul, c. 10, 11, says; "Interior temptations in the timorous are marks of God's favour, not of his displeasure. When do we hear, that notorious sinners are so molested? The more filthy and horrible a temptation is to a devout soul, the more it humbles her, so much the more does it advance the designs of God in her. We are all naturally proud, lovers of ourselves, and ever presuming on ourselves above what we are. This self-esteem and confidence is so prejudicial to our spiritual progress, that the very scent or contagious stench thereof, at whatsoever distance, is enough to blast all hopes of perfection in us. God therefore, in his mercy, would bring us, as it were, by force to the necessary knowledge of ourselves. For this he permitted St. Peter to fall, and St. Paul to suffer a vexatious temptation under his sublime revelations. In like manner, pitying our miseries and perverse inclinations, he permits many abominable temptations to befal us, that we may become humble and sensible of our own wretchedness. By seeing this, we find that we are a source of, what can proceed from us, and what we really are, the very scum of the earth. This is also an amiable purgatory. It is the fruitful seed of virtues, graces, and heavenly crowns. What a glorious sight is such a soul in the eyes of God? What spiritual riches does she not acquire?"

13. The same saint adds, ib. c. 13, that, "if we fall into imperfections, we must not fret, but humble ourselves, and be peaceably penitents. On such occasions, casting a loving glance on God, we ought to say with our hearts and mouths: Lord, I have done like what I am, nor could any thing else be expected from my base heart. It is your mercy that I did not plunge myself headlong into all wickedness; praised for ever be your goodness. Pardon my ingratitude, which I most heartily grieve for. Then go on with fresh watchfulness and courage." It is a mark of pride to be fretful and impatient under a fall, because a soul finds herself weaker and more wretched than she presumed herself to have been. This fretfulness is often the more pernicious temptation of the two. It also hinders a speedy perfect repentance, and is as if a man, who had fallen into the mire, should lie fretting and plunging himself deeper into it. Dorotheus says, (Doctr. 13,) "When a man bears with humility and patience a temptation coming upon him, he passes over it without receiving any trouble or hurt from it."

14. Sometimes it is on account of some secret love of the temptation, or affection to the sin, or of some neglect or fault, that God permits a soul to be molested with temptations. Such persons join to a desire of being delivered from their danger a secret complacency in it, and a fear of being rid of it. Their first duty is to discover and root out entirely this lurking criminal affection, that they may resist and shun sin with their whole hearts; for God is not to be mocked. We read in Rufin's History of Solitaries, b. 2, that a young hermit begged the prayers of an ancient holy man to be freed from a violent temptation, and was told that he nourished that temptation by his own negligence and secret inclination to it. St. Austin, as to his former vicious habits, gives a like account of himself, and in the fervor of his zeal cries out in the words of holy writ; "How much the more they oppressed them, so much the more were they multiplied and increased." Exod. i. 12.

St. Chrysostom having inculcated the necessity we are under of always watching against our spiritual enemies, and standing always armed, adds:

(Hom. 4, in Gen. t. 4, p. 23.) "If we always carry these arms upon us, no arrows of the enemy will ever be able to reach us, but will fall back upon them without any effect. For the grace of God makes us harder and stronger than adamant, and, if we will, absolutely invincible. Therefore, as he who beats adamant does not injure it, but wearies himself, and spends his strength in vain; and as he, who kicks against the goad, wounds his feet; so our affairs stand with the enemy of our salvation, if we keep ourselves always covered with the arms, which the grace of the Holy Ghost furnishes us. For so great is their strength, that our adversary is not able to bear the rays, which dart from them, and his eyes are blinded by them. We are obliged always to bear them, when we go into the streets or market, when to the church, and when we return home, with our friends or in our employs, waking and sleeping, in every moment; we are never to lay them out of our hands. We must moreover take care always to keep them bright, clean, and fit to repulse and overcome our enemy." "He finds no opportunity," says the same father, (Hom. 5, ib. p. 32,) "to assault us with advantage, unless he spies us slothful and unguarded. Therefore we must be always watching and always busy, to be always victorious."

"We must not lose courage in this continual warfare. God would have thee sustain a little labour, that his victory for thee may be thine; as a king will have his son to stand in the battle, throw darts, and appear in the ranks, that the victory may be ascribed to him, though it is he himself, who does all with his army and gains the day; so God does by us in his and our war against the devil." (Hom. 16, in Matt. p. 221, t. 7.) Saint Anthony in the 35th year of his age felt the most furious assaults from the demon of impurity, who exercised his rage in a visible frightful manner. When the temptation was over, and the saint left by the fiend half dead in his ruined cell, as Saint Athanasius relates, Jesus visted him, filling his cell with the light and his soul with the sweetness of his presence. Anthony sighing said to him; "Where wert thou, good Jesus? Where wert thou from the beginning of my conflict? Why wert thou not with me?" But he heard a voice answering him, "Anthony, I was here, and I beheld thy battle and victory; and, because thou didst not yield, I strengthened thee." St. Augustin says, "God himself delights in the spectacle of a christian under temptation, and says to him: I behold you from heaven; fight; conquer; I will crown you." In Ps. 39.

DISCOURSE XLIV.

WATCHFULNESS AGAINST TEMPTATIONS.

Therefore take the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day; and in all things to stand perfect. Ephes. vi. 13.

THE Apostle here closes his epistle to the Ephesians by a most endearing exhortation, which contains an instruction the most important relative to the whole duty of a christian; for, as we on earth are soldiers always in war, always surrounded with implacable enemies; "the life of man is a

warfare upon earth;" so it especial behoves us to be perpetually on our guard, to stand always in our armour, according to St. Paul's expression, that we may be able to resist in the day of danger, and in every action, on all occurrences, be firm to our allegiance against all the enterprizes of the devil. It was this same advice, which our blessed Saviour every where so earnestly inculcates by pressing exhortations, by repeated precepts and parables, and by his example. "If the householder did know what hour the thief would come, he would watch verily, and would not suffer his house to be broken." Luke xii. 39. "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Mat. xxvi. 41. Hence he threatens the bishop of Sardis; "If therefore thou watch not, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come to thee." Apoc. iii. 3. In a word no just man ever persevered but by this means. "Blessed is he who watcheth." Apoc. xvi. 15. No just man ever fell but for want of this watchfulness. "Therefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. x. 12. And again, "Awake ye just, and sin not." 1 Cor. xv. 34. Unless we persevere it signifies little for us now to heap up treasures of merits. "He shall not be crowned unless he strive lawfully." My design therefore is not to enlarge upon the manner, in which we must behave ourselves in temptation; but to examine in what this christian vigilance consists, which is of far greater moment, and what are these arms we must put on; that is, how we must watch every motion of our enemy to prevent being surprised by a stratagem or at a disadvantage, such as the devil never fails to seek for; and how we must always be prepared and ready to repel the attacks of our subtle enemy. Ave Maria.

This christian watchfulness requires five conditions; 1. That we carefully maintain and daily renew in our souls a great horror of sin as the greatest of all evils. 2. That we have a great diffidence in our own weakness, and be truly penetrated with a great fear of falling. 3. That we avoid all occasions of sin, and as much as possible all venial sin. 4. That by fervent prayer we daily beg of God to preserve us from so great an evil. 5. That by mortification we bring our passions into due subjection. It is by these five points we may see, whether we are likely to stand our ground and persevere to the end. As to the first, it is evidently impossible we should ever fall into sin, did we seriously consider what it is; hence the axiom, "every one that sins is ignorant." As we are always in the presence of God; as it is in him we live, move, and exist; as his adorable eyes are ever fixed on us, so ought we perpetually to walk before him, to have him present in every thought and action. He sees you in the field, says St. Augustin, (Serm. 152,) and in your closet; in light and darkness; by day and night; he penetrates the secrets of your heart, and every circumstance of your actions. Dares then a silly worm to offend him in his very presence, before whom the pillars of heaven tremble? Yes; though he would not for the world affront an earthly king he boldly insults that great legislator, whose laws all creatures obey; whose orders heaven and earth punctually comply with. The sinner alone dares to contradict his omnipotent will, dares to infringe and break the order and symmetry of the universe, and to set himself up an enemy against God, and to defy his laws. He rashly offends his all-seeing judge, who is just ready to throw him into hell-flames, did not mercy and compassion make him defer the execution of his justice. He most ungratefully contemns the best of benefactors, tramples on the precious blood of his

God and Redeemer, slights the benefits of his creation, conservation, and a thousand other favours, and despises the inestimable love of God towards him, out of which he had from all eternity prepared and decreed to heap on him eternal happiness with showers of other incomprehensible blessings. He shakes off the yoke of God, and says, I will not serve him, to enlist himself under the devil's banner, preferring his slavery to the service of God. Who has ever heard of such dreadful things? He sacrilegiously tears off from Christ those members he had united to that divine head, and prostitutes them to Satan. He defiles without concern the living image of the eternal God, and impiously pollutes his consecrated temple. "Do you not consider whose image you have violated? to whom you have done the contumely?" St. Anselm. He expels from his breast the Holy Ghost, with all his heavenly graces. He forgets and violates his baptismal allegiance, and so often repeated solemn engagements, breaking through all the ties of nature and grace to make himself an enemy to God, and set up a standard of rebellion against his creator. As the priest at baptism expelling the devil said: "Depart from him, unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Spirit;"[a] now he villainously cries out, "Depart from me, Holy Spirit, and give place to the unclean spirit." A blasphemy so outrageous, that it is impossible to think on it without the utmost horror. But it is not my design to dilate on the malice of sin, or the blindness and ingratitude of a sinner, which if we but well consider, it is impossible we should ever fall into so great a misfortune. It was with good reason St. Anselm said, (Simil c. 191, p. 188,) "if I saw sin on one side, and hell open on the other, and must fall into either, I had rather jump into hell pure, than defiled even enter heaven, were it possible." And St. Francis of Sales says; "It far surpasses all astonishment, that a rational creature should embrace so hideous an evil." But sinners say they will but for once gratify their passion, and immediately rise again; for all christians must sin either in these dispositions, or in downright despair. And how can folly and insensible blindness ever reach to so high a pitch? They insult God, contristate the Holy Ghost, lose all the merits of their past life, make the heavens as well as the church militant weep for them, produce in nature a monster, to extinguish which Christ died, and breed an evil of infinite malice; for which all creatures by millions of ages spent in severe penances could never contribute the smallest portion of satisfaction; and all this with a firm design of repenting the moment after, and heartily wishing they had never committed it, so that they would give the universe to have it undone, if possible, resolving beforehand to do severe penance for it as long as they live. Be astonished, O heavens, at this! But foolish creature, be not deceived, God is not to be mocked. True repentance is an effect of grace, a miracle more surpassing the course of nature than for a dead man to rise again. And do you imagine, that God ordinarily grants so easily such extraordinary graces, or works such miracles in favour of presuming sinners? He is merciful, but just, at the same time, to punish such daring presumption and abuse of his goodness. And one sin by its weight draws to another, according to that axiom taken from St. Gregory, and often repeated by St. Thomas. Nay, though it be immediately blotted out by speedy repentance, the wound leaves a deep impression on the soul; and the devil, armed with this corruption of

[a] Exi ab eo, spiritus immunde, & da locum spiritui sancto.

nature, obtains even after repentance a great command over this poor soul, which is seldom able to bear the violence necessary to break these chains. So, at best, it is far more easy to avoid the first sin, than it will be afterwards; and the repentance is generally very uncertain and slippery. The will still remains divided between God and her passion; has indeed a velleity to serve God; but this serves only to delude the soul, and persuade her she is truly penitent, whilst in reality she retains a fond complaisance for the sin, and cannot bear totally to break with it. Consequently she soon falls again, and as easily rises by a false repentance. If we let these considerations imprint in our souls a true idea and horror of sin, it will be the greatest step always to avoid it; for it is not possible to fall into sin, if we are truly penetrated with a sense of its monstrous impiety. But this horror alone is not sufficient, unless we be also apprised of our danger of falling, and penetrated with a saving fear. "Fear God, and observe his commandments; for this is the whole man." Eccl. xii. 13. A depraved world by its maxims and examples is a violent torrent, whose impetuous and almost irresistible stream bears down all it meets, unless we are strongly supported by a superior grace. But though we fly the world, and by mortification become crucified and dead to its pleasures and inordinate desires, yet we always carry about with us our most dangerous enemy, our flesh and corrupt inclinations, our own body, the domestic enemies of man; to which we are by nature inseparably bound, and which even out of charity to ourselves we are obliged to nourish and cherish, though always combating against us. St. John Clim. gr. 15. St. Bernard. (Serm. 5, in Quadrag.) St. Ephrem, (de sui reprehens., &c.) It is this which beats us with our own staff, and, though our necessary assistant, is by the corruption of nature become the principal actor and cause of our danger. The devil, that subtle spirit, by nature and experience crafty and malicious, comes in to join his efforts, and second our passions; sometimes by craft, sometimes by open attacks he seeks our ruin, and like a roaring lion continually roves about seeking whom he may attack at a disadvantage and devour. For we fight not against flesh and blood only, but also against the princes and powers of hell, the rulers of this world of darkness, subtle aerial spirits. Eph. vi. Our only confidence is in God's assistance, and our own vigilance and flight on all occasions. "By the fear of the Lord every one declineth from evil." Prov. xv. 28. We are like those timid animals, whose only preservation and security is their timorous nature, which makes them fly from the least appearance of danger. And this fear and watchfulness we must never lay aside; for no flight, no state can ever totally rid us of our enemies, or free us from danger. An apostle, under the eyes of the son of God, perished in despair; a prince of the angels fell in heaven; so did Adam in paradise, though replenished with the highest graces, comforted by frequent visits of angels, and exposed only to one temptation. The apostles worked their salvation in fear and trembling; so did all the saints. "Blessed is the man, that is always fearful." Let us then continually pray; "Pierce my heart with thy fear." Let us beg daily of God, that we may never for one moment lose his wholesome fear. "Illuminate mine eyes, that I may never sleep in death."

Our third point clearly follows from hence; viz., that we must shun the least danger, and avoid with the utmost diligence all occasions of sin. If we had a true horror of sin and were conscious of our own weakness,

the sight or very name of a house, company, or employ, which might be an inducement to sin, would make us tremble and start back. We cannot look down a precipice without horror, though there be no danger; dare we then approach so near to sin, and stare it in the face? At best there is but a step between us and sin; I say not between us and a dismal precipice, death or tortures, but sin, that hideous monster, the greatest possible to be produced in nature; and can we be one moment without concern and fear? Dare we go meet it, voluntarily to expose ourselves as a prey to our merciless enemies, though we know that God has so severely threatened such presumption? Let no one rely on strong resolutions; how can these prevail, when God provoked at this rashness abandons him? Let none flatter themselves, that they are above this or that temptation, and that such an occasion is not dangerous to them; to such St. Paul said; "Now you are filled, now you are become rich; without us you reign." 1 Cor. iv. 8. St. Chrysostom will convince them, that this intolerable pride exposes them to a worse fall, and makes their case more desperate. They always carry a corruptible body about with them, and a flame will easily kindle those passions, which they flatter themselves are dead. But we must not only shun all occasions of sin, but most carefully avoid as much as possible all venial failings. A venial sin is an offence of God, and by consequence an exceeding great evil, for which, abstracting from the infinite merits of Christ, man can never duly atone. Can you call that small, which is an offence to God? God regards it as a great fault, and punishes it more severely than it is in the power of man to inflict; and do you give it so soft a name! "Can any thing be small that dishonours God?" (St. Ans. Med. 2, p. 208, ed. Ben.) Venial sins wound our souls, and would not we look on that man as mad, who should say carelessly; prick and cut my body with pins or knives, so that you wound it not mortally? Yet, thus we act with regard to our souls, which are infinitely more precious than our bodies. Again, venial sins, especially when deliberate, of habit, or gross negligence, very much impair charity, and expose the soul exceedingly to some dismal fall. We know the sacred oracle; "He who despiseth small things," &c., and what signifies it how, if they at last damn the soul, any more than how the water enters, whether drop by drop, or in waves, so as to sink the ship. That soul, which falls by chance into mortal sin, is not ordinarily so negligent and obdurate, nor consequently in so dangerous a state, as a soul, that is tepid and habituated in evil by a familiarity with venial sins.

I have not time to insist on the two other points, but shall briefly add, that our reflections on our own frailty and great impotency convince us we must have daily recourse to earnest prayer; and as often as we visit the blessed sacrament, hear mass, or fall on our knees during morning or night prayers, or any other devotions, we must with tears, and all the fervour of our souls, beg of our sweet redeemer to look on this poor creature, whom he has created and redeemed, and never permit us to be separated from him; we must earnestly intreat him, by his tender love for us, and his precious wounds on the cross, that he suffer not his precious blood to be spilt for us in vain; that he never permit our weakness and malice to make void so much love, or so many favours heaped upon us. It is this constant and fervent prayer, that must be our only anchor of hope, our only bulwark against our enemies. A soul not fenced by it is like a city without fortifications, exposed to every enemy. St. Chrysostom, l. 2, de

orand. Deo. Though we make good resolutions at present, it is God alone, that must preserve them, and crown them with victory; so we must continually apply to him never to suffer us to be lost or fall into sin; a misfortune we cannot think on without horror; but it is God alone that can secure us against it. Let us then repeat continually with fervour, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Lastly, It is a most necessary condition, daily to mortify our flesh, if we hope to get or maintain a mastery over our passions. It is a contradiction to allow a free scope, as far as it is not expressly sinful, and still to hope it will be possible to restrain it within the bounds of duty. Our delicate flesh startles at the least mortification, and we seem to fly from it as from death. It is surprising we should have so totally degenerated from the primitive christians, and have so forgotten the gospel, which in every page inculcates it as one of the most essential points of christian morality. How do St. Paul, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Jerom testify, that they chastised their flesh to bring it into subjection? Certainly we have not discovered any other easier way of overcoming temptations. I mean no extraordinary or great mortification, but only self-denials, which ought to be practised many times every day, and are very acceptable and meritorious in the sight of God, exceedingly beneficial to our souls, and conducive to a perfect mastery of ourselves. If our will be not accustomed to be frequently checked, it will often carry us beyond our duty and allegiance to God. Had you a furious wild beast, would you give it its liberty, or keep it chained up? Our will is this lion, this tiger. Self-will is our most dangerous enemy. "It robs heaven, it fills hell, it subjects the world to the devil, it renders the blood of Christ of no effect."[a] St. Bern. Ah! that precious blood of Christ becomes by self-will spilt in vain for so many souls; this attacks heaven by its rebellions, and dares against the voice of nature to set itself up against God, and fly in the face of infinite majesty. If we allow it liberty, it will soon grow too strong for us; by condescending to it we increase its strength, and redouble its forces the next time it attacks us.

Nothing remains but to conclude with the words of the apostle: "As to the rest, brethren, be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of his power." Eph. vi. 10. This must be our only confidence. "Put on the armour of God, that you may stand against the snares of the devil." v. 11. Stand as soldiers always prepared for battle, armed with the coat-mail of justice and piety; in all things taking the shield of faith, i. e. penetrated with the truths of faith, by daily meditation renew a horror of sin and a fear of falling, which may direct and accompany all our actions, by which we may "be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of our wicked enemy," v. 16, and to be excited to keep such watch over all our actions, "as to fly at the least sight of evil." 1 Thess. v. 22. To compass this, let us diligently make use of our morning and night examens to find out and shun all occasions, and to cut off all failings and deliberate imperfections. To bring our stubborn will to obedience, let us rejoice, in indifferent matters, to follow the will of another, receive all contradictions with joy and resignation, and curb it by frequent self-denials. A soul, that loves God, gladly embraces contradictions, and keeps so strict a watch to be irreproachable in the smallest thing, that the least liberty or excess

[a] Spoliat cælum, ditat infernum, subjicit mundum diabolo, sanguinem Christi reddit vacuum,

immediately excites in her a horror, and she flies even where there is scarcely the appearance of an enemy. But above all, let us observe this pressing advice of St. Paul: "In all prayer and supplication praying at all time in spirit; and in the same watching in all instance and supplication," (Eph. vi. 18;) praying continually for this grace of perseverance for ourselves and the whole church. If we are deficient in any part of this advice, we cannot hope for our crown; but the attending to it will not fail to bring us to that happiness.

DISCOURSE XLV.

ON AVOIDING THE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

1. To be victorious in our spiritual war, the capital point is an extreme solicitude and care to avoid the occasions and dangers of sin. As such animals, as have too strong enemies, are safe only by their fearfulness and flight, so reason alone suffices to teach us what instinct has engrafted in them; viz., that, being weakness itself, our security consists in our caution and timorousness. Even were we equal to our adversaries, it would be an extreme rashness and folly by choice to hazard a dangerous battle, when we had a sure means of conquering, merely by avoiding it; but it is much more so, as the enemies we fear are so powerful and ourselves so weak. Fear is the mother of security: it is our strength, because it removes us from danger. "In the fear of the Lord is the confidence of strength." Prov. xiv. 26. Brittle glasses are preserved whole only by being carefully kept out of the way of danger. An humble fear will certainly always secure us; but a presumptuous boldness will be sure to ruin us. The strongest pillars, the highest mountains of Libanus have been thrown down by being exposed to storms.

2. Not only our own weakness, but the conduct of God in the dispensation of the succour sets this incontestable truth in the clearest light. Those, who wilfully throw themselves into occasions of danger, cannot count upon his necessary assistance; nay, they may assure themselves he will not give it to them; for he himself, who is always faithful to his word, has most expressly declared this in many places, and the very interest of his glory obliges him to such a conduct; otherwise his succour would make us prove slothful and careless, instead of remaining watchful and humble. Such a rash presumption is a tempting of God, and this by all the different ways, by which a creature can be capable of that crime. It is to ask, and even rely on a miracle without necessity. A man has an ordinary means of sure victory by the opportunity of flight; but by running on his enemy, he asks an extraordinary assistance of grace, i. e. the most superfluous miracle. When the devil proposed to our Saviour to throw himself headlong down a precipiece, that the angels might support and carry him, he rejected the illusion by answering; "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." When God commanded Noe to build his ark, would it not have been a most insolent petition, if he had requested to have been preserved amidst the waters, without giving himself that trouble? or if Lot, amidst the flames of Sodom, had made a

similar request rather than leave that city? In the case now before us, the miracle asked is not less idle, nor the presumption less extravagant. Secondly, it tempts God, not indeed by restraining the bounds of his mercy, as the Bethulians did, but by extending them beyond the limits he has fixed for them, and by pretending to give him the law and prescribe to him the manner, in which we are to be succoured by him, thus inverting the ordinary course and rule of his providence in the dispensation of his graces; but these are granted by him according to his divine order and decrees, not by our will or choice. Thirdly, this presumption likewise tempts God in another manner, viz., by hypocrisy and insincerity, as the Jews tempted Christ, asking whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. For is it not a mocking and tempting of God to implore his succour, and to pray, as he has taught us, that he lead us not into temptation, and yet, at the same time, to run ourselves into temptation, to become our own tempters? This monstrous contradiction is openly to dissemble with, and notoriously attempt to impose upon God.

3. It is not to be wondered, that such a criminal insult should deserve to be punished by the Almighty, and whoever should be guilty of it abandoned to perish in his insolence. This the oracle of truth itself assures us, declaring that "He who loves the danger, shall perish in it."

Though the soul should not proceed any farther in the sin, the very consenting to this danger is itself a mortal sin, both against her allegiance due to God, and against the charity she owes to herself and the care of her own salvation. To expose rashly our corporal life is a mortal sin; how much more to expose that of our soul, our eternity?

If we voluntarily go into an occasion of sin, we act the part of the devil against ourselves, are our own tempters, and much more dangerously so than the devils could be: we march out to meet our enemies, and join and exceedingly strengthen them against us; for by this we court the world to deceive us, give to the devil the greatest power over us, and heighten concupiscence to the utmost. In an occasion, the tempting object strikes our senses near, immediately, and most violently. Experience shows how strongly an object acts when present, especially if it be a criminal one, attempered and agreeable to the senses and to concupiscence. The impression on the organ passes to the heart with an almost irresistible power of enchanting it, and the whole man is in a flame, which he himself has kindled. We must add, that the soul is, of herself, on the edge of the precipice, just ready and disposed to slide down it by the natural tendency of concupiscence, especially if she sought the occasion. By this it appears, that she has not a present just horror of the danger and evil, and that she is even inclined to it by a secret affection and passion; for she seeks not the occasion but because she is pleased with it, and finds a relish in it. To this bent of nature, to this weight of concupiscence, and to this affection already admitted and wilfully indulged in the heart, if we add the impression, which the presence of the object makes, setting all the fuel of concupiscence in a violent flame, how is it possible not to be entirely swallowed up in the gulph? particularly, when abandoned by God, as such a soul is sure to be.

The devil owes his fatal success, in destroying daily thousands of souls, to this artifice: he at first seduces them into the occasions, and thence he easily draws them into all his snares at pleasure. He represents the occasions as stripped of what makes them most formidable or frightful, and

engages the unwary to embrace them, full of a presumptuous confidence in their own strength and resolutions. When they are once engaged in them, they are now his captives at command. How did the first sinner of the human race fall? She fixed her eyes with curiosity on the fruit, which God had forbidden her to eat: she saw it agreeable to the sight, and considered it till her heart was delighted with the object; then the devil with ease drew her into that transgression, which, being imitated by her husband, entailed guilt on all their posterity.

David was a saint, a prophet, a king according to God's own heart; yet a dangerous occasion, the sight of a woman, which he did not shut his eyes against, was a snare, in which he fell. Solomon, the wisest of men, by intermarrying with idolatrous women, was so far blinded and infatuated by them, as to build temples to, and prostrate himself before, Chamos the idol of the Moabites, and those of all his other women. The strong Sampson owed his ruin to a like occasion. St. Peter had been witness of Christ's greatest miracles, and had seen him in glory, yet was so weak as to forswear himself when engaged in an occasion. Will not we reeds tremble?

4. The law and light of nature dictates to us this obligation: for what forbids an effect, forbids also its cause or what leads to it; and whatever commands an end, commands likewise the necessary means of attaining it. By this principle, whosoever wills the occasion wills in it the sin.[a]

Christ's positive command as to this point is likewise the most peremptory and express. "If thy hand, &c." Matt. xviii. 8, Mark ix. 42.

This is not to be literally understood, as if it could be ever necessary to cut off a hand or pluck out an eye: but the words are thus strong, to show us, that whatever is a stumbling-block to our souls, or an occasion of any sin, though it be as dear even as an eye, or as necessary as a hand, must be parted with, let it cost us ever so much, and the separation be ever so painful; for, can a hand be cut off, or an eye torn out without pain? "Spare nothing to spare thy soul," says St. Jerom, ep. 13.

Our divine Saviour, mild in all his precepts, here seems severe, and even cruel; such is the importance and indispensible necessity of this precept. We must further observe, that he commands us to quit this occasion instantly, without deliberating or the least dallying; not by halves, but entirely and at once; he did not say, strike the eye or wound the hand, but totally pluck it out, cut it off: nor only this, but cast it from thee, lest, if it be left even near thee, it become again an occasion of sin to thee.[b] Not to shun an occasion is a formal disobedience, an open declared transgression of this so very strict precept.

5. To shun the occasions of sin with all possible diligence, is one of the most important rules in our spiritual warfare; and it is an essential duty of every true penitent, to foresee, avoid, and arm himself against them. A neglect of this duty is a fatal source of ruin to innumerable souls. Almost all sinners pretend to be penitents at certain periods; on certain festivals in the year every one seems touched with sentiments of compunction; but after the solemnity is over, what change appears in the lives of the generality of persons? After their penance, they follow the same course of life, frequent the same company, and the same dangerous places, the very

[a] Qui vult causam, vult etiam effectum, says the philosopher's axiom.
[b] Nulla securitas vicino serpente dormire. St. Jerom.

presence of which cannot but excite and inflame the old passions. The crime indeed affrights, but the danger of it does not alarm them. They resolve to renounce swearing, but never think seriously of suppressing hasty motions by silence under them. They promise no more to return to the sins, which were but the consequence of their slothful, unprofitable, sensual life, of their familiarities in conversation, or licentiousness or superfluity in discourse, and the like; yet they change nothing in these causes; as to their other disorders they still pursue the courses, which lead to them. Alas! a conversion implies an universal change of conduct. Our blessed Saviour, whose resurrection was the model of a true repentance or rising from sin, being risen from the dead, did not appear in public as before, or converse with the multitudes, but showed himself only privately to his chosen disciples, not that he feared any further violence from the Jews, being then immortal, but to give us an example how great a change a conversion ought to produce, not only in a man's heart, but also in his exterior comportment and whole life. Let every one, after this, consult but his own experience: if he ever followed the same plan of life after a repentance of transgressions, he will find, that he as often returned again to the same: the presence of an occasion made him forget all his good purposes and resolutions: the same dangers always found him again the same person.

6. Some will allege, that they have now taken an effectual resolution to stand firm, and are armed against the danger: but these sentiments of fervour, this horror of the evil are awakened under the temptation: in the occasion they are not the same persons: abandoned by grace, in punishment of their rash presumption, blinded by passion, and their will enervated, they are an easy prey. The devil is sensible of this; accordingly he is not alarmed on seeing a soul make ever so great a stir in preparing herself for repentance, and thus to break his chains. Provided he can but throw her into a lethargy with regard to the occasions, he is sure that, though she should truly rise at present, he shall soon recover her again on the first occasions, and hamper her worse than ever in his nets; in the same manner as Pharaoh his type easily consented to let the Israelites go to sacrifice in the desart, upon condition of their leaving their families and baggage behind, being assured by these pledges of their return under his tyranny. A bird, held by a thread tied to its foot, may spring up and flutter as if it had recovered its liberty, but is pulled back at pleasure.

7. If we cast our eyes upon the holy penitents, who shine as lamps to direct sinners in their conversion, we shall see that there was not one of them, who did not with his sins renounce the entire former course of his life, and set out on a new plan of devotion and regularity, greater retirement, &c.; above all, quitting company and other more dangerous occasions, though ever so necessary or agreeable. St. Gregory, Hom. 24, in Evang. observes, that Peter is said, for some time after his conversion, to have returned to his profession of a fisherman; but that Matthew, quitting his secular life, bid an eternal farewell to the revenue department, because this latter occupation was a dangerous occasion of sin, not the former. What an alteration in the whole conduct of St. Mary Magdalen, when she was converted to God? It would have been a chimerical project to have pretended to forsake her sins, without changing the whole tenor of her life. The saints, long strengthened in habits of virtue and grace,

even many from their infancy, owed their preservation from sin only to their extreme caution in shunning all dangers; in which their nicety and fearfulness appear even surprising. Habitual victories over their passions, and long courses of universal mortification and self-denials, had subdued in them concupiscence as much as this mortal state will permit; yet they feared whatever might awaken it; they said, that, if it seemed dormant, it was only hid under the embers, and trembled at the sight of whatever could kindle it again. How much greater is this necessity and obligation in penitents, who had long groaned under habits, and fortified their passions; and whose scars, scarcely yet well healed, are easily opened again; whose senses are lively to catch and imbibe; whose consupiscence is open and greedy to suck in the poison, that is presented?

This extreme caution is more particularly necessary with regard to cases of impurity. See Teut. pages 2090, 2091.

8. Some occasions are called remote, which expose indeed to some little danger or incitement to sin, but such as is easily overcome. A person is not bound to shun all these, because the task would be impossible; "otherwise he should go out of the world." 1 Cor. v. 10. For the world, all states, and every step we take in them, are full of such occasions. "Creatures are made in temptation to the souls of men, and into a trap to the feet of the foolish." Wisdom, xiv. 11. But it is always a crime to court or seek such occasions, this being the way to make them become immediate dangers. Moreover we are bound to labour to diminish these occasions, shunning at least the greater, and all frequency or familiarity; whereas this would also render them immediate. For the rest we must arm ourselves continually against them, especially by assiduous mortification, prayer, and watchfulness, taking care that our provision of strengtheners and antidotes be always fresh. The purity and innocence of our hearts and consciences depend very much upon this vigilance, and are proportioned to it. How watchful were the saints in this point? For this reason St. John Baptist chose the wilderness from his infancy.

9. Some occasions are immediate, and these require our greatest diligence, both to discover and to shun them. Some indeed are internal, and cannot be avoided. These we must powerfully arm ourselves against, and with extreme diligence speedily overcome, and render them only remote dangers. So great is the unhappy propensity to any sin created by a habit.

Certain external occasions are sometimes also of such a nature, that it may not be in our power to avoid them; as if a soldier, who is engaged to serve, finds such from his very profession itself. The most earnest endeavours must be used, that may convert them into remote ones. Nor will God's assistance be wanting, who preserved the children in the furnace, Daniel in the lion's den, and St. Thecla in the flames, when not their voluntary rashness, but his providence had placed them in those dangers, only for the greater glory of his name.

10. Occasions are either relative or absolute. Those are called relative, which are not such of themselves, but only in regard to certain persons: for though a thing be lawful in itself, yet if it be prudently feared from the circumstances of a person, that he will by it fall into sin, this is an immediate occasion to him, though lawful to others. Through the corruption of the world, such are, to a great many, war, traffic, magistracies. the professions of the law, &c., by which some men are accustomed to be drawn into swearing, cheating, injustice, calumnies, hatred, lying, or other

sins. Such persons cannot be absolved, unless they have first converted these into remote occasions, or renounced these dangerous professions. It is the more necessary to be solicitous and watchful in this matter, as it is through the neglect of confessors herein, that we see numberless abuses and enormous sins reign in many trades and states of life, so that it is impossible for men to exercise some of them to their temporal profit, without losing their souls, as St. Charles Borromeo complains; Instr. Confess. par. 4, p. 767. "There are many employments, which can scarcely or not at all be exercised without sin. To these it is necessary that a soul never return after her conversion," says St. Gregory the great, Hom. 24, in Evang.

Absolute occasions of sin are those, which are such of their own nature, and to all persons, as bad company, impious books, lewd discourse, ordinary stage entertainments, the sight of any object dangerous to the heart, &c.

11. Whatever the occasion be, if it appears, we are instantly to fly with Joseph as soon as he had heard the lewd suggestion of his mistress. No excuses are to be admitted; no deliberation, no delay. A man, who sees himself in the midst of flames, does not reason or examine; his danger prevents all reflections; it is enough that he sees himself going to perish; therefore he must do every thing to save himself.

You will say: "What will the world say? Such a retreat will give scandal, &c." Alas! not the separation from, but the continuance of the occasion will excite the suspicions and rumours of the public. After all, what matters it to consider, what the world will say? Is it not our first and only duty to save our souls? We are rather to lose all things than ever hazard this, or forfeit the grace of God.

But men cannot be persuaded, that such and such are to them immediate occasions. They do not even see, that they offend in them. This insensibility is no mark of their innocence, but only shows that their heart is more corrupted by the long slavery of the passion, and so far blinded and seared, as not to perceive its wounds. A limb already stupified by the poison feels not the bite of the serpent. But this is only a sign, that the venom has already made great progress. The evil is not so great, as long as the heart is sensible of it; for it must not then be quite entirely corrupted.

But sinners find blind guides, who flatter their passions, and assure them against occasions as if they were not so dangerous to them. We must therefore, with the saints, not listen to such deceivers, or suffer ourselves to be lulled by them into such a snare. Though an angel from heaven were to announce such doctrine, contrary to the gospel, we are not to hear him. In bodily dangers should we follow the advice of those, who would send us into places suspected of the plague? Do we believe any sort of advisers, or consult enemies who wish that we should perish, whether such or such roads be safe? Do we expose our treasures in places frequented by robbers? Do we trust a vessel to every pilot, or believe every information, when there is danger of running on shores full of rocks and shoals? Ah! "The sons of the world are more prudent than the sons of light." We carry the inestimable treasure of grace in brittle vessels; and shall we run over rocks without fear of breaking them? It is a light; and shall we go where furious winds blow on all sides, without any fear of losing it?

12. Some occasions are involuntary, either physically, as bad company

to a man in prison; or morally, as a wife inciting to anger, swearing, &c. to her husband; the profession of arms to a soldier accustomed by it to certain irregularities. For it is not lawful for the husband to forsake his wife without her consent, or for the soldier his profession without leave. But such persons are to convert these into remote occasions by assiduous labour and prayer; nor are they ordinarily to be absolved, till they have given proofs of this being strenuously effected. When the occasion cannot be renounced without some very great loss or temporal danger, it may be allowed the person to try to make it only a remote occasion; but if it continue still triumphant, it must be forsaken, though as necessary as a hand. "Penance is false, when the penitent does not depart from a profession, either at court or in business, which he is not able to perform without sin." Conc. Gen. Later. 2, can. 22. Pope Innocent XI. condemned these propositions; n. 62. "An immediate occasion is not to be shunned, when there is some lawful and profitable reason not to shun it;" and n. 63. "It is lawful to seek directly an immediate occasion of sinning, for our own or our neighbour's spiritual or temporal good." If the occasion be very urgent and dangerous, a penitent is not to be absolved, even the first time, till it be removed; e. g. a concubine expelled. Greater severity likewise is necessary as to occasions, that consist in things quite idle and superfluous as in frequenting ale houses, which are occasions of quarrels, lewd discourse, excess, &c. bad company, promiscuous dancing, routs, &c. If the occasion should recur only once a year, as at a certain fair, it may still be immediate.

See elsewhere on bad company, scandal, &c.

DISCOURSE XLVI.

ON THE PREDOMINANT PASSIONS, AND EXAMINATION GENERAL AND PARTICULAR.

1. Souls have a great disposition towards some certain passion or other. This natural bent, which arises from the very frame, and is interwoven in the constitution of man's mind and body, is usually strengthened by habit. By an early watchfulness against it, this enemy might have been easily subdued in its infancy; but this is a rare happiness of but few chosen souls. It is the misfortune of the generality blindly to foster and cherish it, even from their tender years, and often without discovering its malice, even disguising it in many shapes to themselves under the name of some virtue. This is the origin of our master or ruling passions, which hold the principal empire in our hearts. They commonly subject to themselves, in some degree, even our other vices, which assail us the more dangerously under their banners, and which in a concurrence often yield to, and are swallowed up by them, as Aaron's rod, converted into a serpent, devoured those of the Egyptian magicians.[a]

[a] All spread their charms, but charms not all alike;
On different senses different objects strike:
Hence different passions more or less inflame,
As strong or weak, the organs of the frame;

It was ambition that governed Cæsar in his triumphs: this ruled his virtues as well as his vices; influenced his clemency as well as his vanity; and, had he lived in the old Roman days, might have made him aim at praise by sobriety and temperance. This predominant passion is often the source of all or most of the sins, which we commit.

2. This master passion, though the great corrupter of our virtues, and the spring of our other vices, is generally unknown itself. The inordinate fondness we bear it spreads so much darkness over our eyes, as to hinder us from discovering this idol. It frequently happens, that a person practises great austerities, and vigorously resists all other passions, yet leaves this uncontrouled. From this blindness in discerning, and this difficulty in resisting this passion, proceed the general miscarriages of souls in their spiritual warfare. The devil lets them, without difficulty, do some good works, and labour against other inferior passions, providing they do but leave him this untouched, which is the fortress, by which he resides in them, and commands them at pleasure. Do not we see many great reciters of prayers, rigorous fasters, strict and severe in renouncing worldly pleasures; yet, all this while, slaves to their own whims, or to covetousness, vanity, and pride, love of softness, sloth, and ease, sensual friendships, melancholy, anger, &c. The great Tertullian, with all his austerities, never overcame that pride, by which he became a scandal to the church. Many multiply such exercises as are pleasing to their humour, but shun what is disagreeable to it, or proper for mortifying their favourite passions. This is so tender a part, that they cannot bear to be touched in it ever so lightly. When God commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites, he easily obeyed as to the multitude; but then he spared Agag, the king, and preserved what was most precious in his eyes; 1 Kings xv. 9. So do we readily sacrifice the common passions, yet screen and shelter our favourite idols. Men frequent the sacraments, but carry these serpents in their breasts into the very sanctuary. O what confessions! What sacraments! Even in sickness, and to death, they continue to cherish them. When do we see the miser renounce the love of money at the approach of death? On the contrary, he seems then to cleave faster to his mammon, in so much that many cannot be engaged, without the greatest difficulty, to settle their affairs by a timely will. What! to make over

> And hence our master passion in the breast,
> Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.
>
> *Pope's Essay on Man*, v. 117.

> Each vital humour, which should feed the whole,
> Soon flows to this, in body or in soul;
> Whatever warms the heart or fills the breast,
> As the mind opens, and its functions spread;
> Imagination plies her dangerous art,
> And pours it all upon the peccant part.
> Nature its mother, habit is its nurse,
> Wit, spirit, faculties but make it worse;
> Reason itself but gives it edge and power,
> As heaven's blest beam turns vinegar more sour.
>
> *Ib. v.* 129, 138.

> That very Cæsar born in Scipio's days
> Had aim'd like him, by chastity at praise.
> Lucullus, whom frugality could charm,
> Had roasted turnips in the Sabine farm.
>
> *Id. Ethic. ep.* 1, *v*, 216, 219.

all! this is what they cannot think of, though dying. We observe the same of other favourite habits, as pride, impatience, &c. which seem only to grow stronger in the last agonies of life. The reason is; men have formed their consciences to this passion; it has passed into nature; its excesses, by custom, appear innocent

3. Nevertheless, as long as this is spared, the soul will be subject to perpetual relapses, because their secret source ever subsists; as long as this is the idol of our hearts, our virtues being tainted by it are no better than illusion; our painful exercises without fruit; and our advances towards virtue, in a great measure, lost labour. As a drop of poison, spread through all our veins, infects the whole habit of our body, so this leaven diffuses itself over all our actions, and defiles our very virtues. This one enemy is often a greater obstacle to the empire of grace, and to its motions in the soul, than all the other passions together; as one powerful rebel will make greater havoc in a kingdom, and do more mischief, than many petty disturbers of the peace. This is also a perpetual obstacle to our dying to ourselves, and to our union with God. Though we should be without ambition, avarice, jealousy, or sloth, if e. g. any sensual fondness still reign in our hearts, self-love thereby maintains its full empire in us.

On the other side, if this passion be rooted out, the others will fall with it, or at least be very much weakened by its conquest; as, if the main pillar be knocked down, it draws the whole building after it; if the general be killed, the army is easily routed; if the head be struck off, the body remains a trunk without life or motion, As then the subduing of our predominant passions is our most difficult task; and, at the same time a victory most necessary, and attended with the greatest advantages; these being the prime movers of all the irregularities of the heart, and the ordinary source of the damnation of souls; it is the first point, in our spiritual welfare, that we diligently study and discover these sources of our dangers and miseries; which is to be done by humble prayer, begging the divine light to show us to ourselves; secondly, by a close examination and strict watch over all the motions of our hearts; thirdly, by the advice of a faithful director, to whom we are to lay open our interior, and who may be able impartially to judge of the hidden springs of our affections and actions.

When our principal enemy is discovered, we are to single it out from amongst the rest, and to use a singular diligence in all our meditations, prayers, frequenting the sacraments, examinations, and in all our thoughts and actions, to arm ourselves against it, shun its more dangerous occasions, and acquire the contrary virtue in an heroical degree. We must make this victory our principal affair: nothing will make us more sure to succeed in an undertaking than if we apply ourselves wholly to it, be entirely penetrated with it, and pursue it, without dividing our earnestness upon different objects. We must, in some measure, imitate the king of Syria, who, fighting against Achab the king of Israel, gave this order to his troops: "Do not fight against little or great, but against the king of Israel alone." 2 Par. xviii. 30, and, he being accordingly slain, his whole army was defeated by that one stroke.

4. A great and necessary means to overcome our passions is a continual watchfulness over, and strict daily examination of, our hearts and all our actions. The care of our souls is a cultivating of virtue in them, and it

may be compared to that of a vineyard, or of a garden, which is never at an end, but requires a continual pruning. Vices or weeds, since the corruption of nature by sin, are, as it were, the natural produce of its soil. They must be diligently plucked up as soon as they begin to shoot; if this be neglected, they very soon overspread the whole face of the field. "I passed over the ground of the slothful man, and the vineyard of the foolish man; and behold nettles had covered the whole, and thorns had spread over its face, and the fence of stone was destroyed." Prov. xxiv. 30. Every christian must say, during the whole course of this mortal life: "It is now the time of pruning." Cant. ii. 12. Upon which words St. Bernard writes thus: Serm. 58, in Cant. n. 10. "Who can imagine, that he has ever so entirely pruned away all that is superfluous, as to think he has no more to pare off? Believe me; what have been cut off, shoot up again; what have been expelled, return; and what have been extinguished, revive. It is doing very little to have once pruned all; we must be often, nay always pruning; because, if we do not deceive ourselves, we always find enough, that requires paring away. Whether thou wilt or no, the Jabusite dwells within thy bounds; he may be subdued, but can never be extirpated."

5. A physician always examines to see how his patient goes on; what changes happen in him; whether for better or for worse; what remedies and precautions are necessary against future dangers. In places besieged; nay, in time of peace, in frontier places the garrisons make every evening their rounds, to see what posture every thing is in, and whether in a good condition of defence, and what dangers or snares may threaten, what breaches have been made, and how they are to be repaired. There is far more necessity of the like care in the soul, as the enemy's wiles are far greater and more difficult to be discovered. Every one therefore ought daily to examine the state of his soul, and in his morning exercise to make or renew his resolutions of shunning the particular occasions and dangers, and of seizing opportunities of the practice of virtue; and these must be strengthened by prayer for that end. It is still more necessary, that in his evening exercise, after begging the light of the Holy Ghost, he examine his thoughts, and more dangerous and principal actions and words of the day; then by a short act of contrition repent of, and blot out his failings, and arm and strengthen himself by good purposes of shunning dangers, and employing particular means and antidotes for the future.

The royal prophet gives us this lesson; Ps. iv. "What things you say in your hearts, be pierced with compunction for in your beds," or evening recollection. By which words he exhorts never to neglect this evening examination, and acts of compunction, as St. Chrysostom observes; who adds, in Ps. 4, t. 5, p. 19, ed. Mont. "Let these things be done every day; and never compose yourself to sleep, O man, till you shall have first considered in mind the things you have done in the day, and you will be strengthened against the dangers of relapse the following day. What you do in money affairs, never let two days pass without taking an account of your expenses, lest forgetfulness bring on confusion; do this also in your actions every day. In the evening, demand of your soul an exact account, and condemn her in your mind for all she has sinned in; punish her, and command her no more to reiterate offences. So great will

be the profit of this exercise, that, if faithfully practised, it will make us perfect in one month. Let us never neglect so great a good."

6. The very heathen philosophers teach us this most advantageous means to overcome our passions. It was the saying of one of the Grecian principal sages:[a] "Before a man goes out, let him consider and form a plan of his actions; after them, let him reflect how and in what manner he has performed each." Pythagoras also[b] laid this precept on all his followers, that every one, when returned, should examine himself; In what hast thou transgressed? What hast thou done at its proper time? What not? And the golden verses, which bear his name, deliver this rule in these terms; v. 39, 44. "Never close your eyes to sleep before you have carefully run over in mind all the actions of the day in order, saying to yourself: Where have I been? What have I done? What have I omitted? Approve the well done; but correct and punish yourself for what was ill." A Roman philosopher is thus described by Seneca.[c] "Before going to his rest at night, he asks his soul: What evil hast thou healed to-day? What vice has thou resisted? I myself call myself to account every day, and plead my own cause. When the light is removed, and all is silent, it is my custom to search the whole day: I consider and weigh my actions and words; I hide nothing from myself; I pass over nothing; for I can say to myself: Take care thou doest that no more; in that disputation thou wast too obstinate or vehement; do not again enter into a contest with the unlearned; they will not learn, who have never applied themselves to the study of truth. Thou spokest to another with too great freedom or too harshly: take care for the future not only that what thou sayest be the truth, but also that he, to whom thou speakest, can bear such a truth."

How much more ought a christian, by this practice, to call himself to a rigorous account every day, to prevent the severity of God's tribunal, by judging himself severely; to discover his most subtle enemies and sins; (for many will escape him under the folds of self-love, without this care) and stop the growth of hidden passions, by detecting and nipping them in the bud?

7. Besides this daily general examination, there is another recommended very much by eminent servants of God, called the particular one. This is made wholly upon one particular vice or virtue, which is the subject of a person's principal endeavours, and which he has singled out as more necessary for him to apply himself to. The predominant passion, to which we find ourselves the most subject, and its contrary virtue must be the subject of it to the end of our lives. This is an enemy we must never have done with, as the devil will never cease to be blowing it up again into new flames. By this means we shall chiefly make its conquest our characteristical virtue, in like manner as those saints who, being by nature inclined to choler, have made themselves most particularly eminent for their singular meekness and sweetness of temper. St. Ignatius prescribes a quarter of an hour before dinner for this particular examination, and a reflection on its subject. But it may be joined with the general examen at evening, which a person may make with a particular attention to that vice, and to the resolutions and means he had proposed to himself against it. The predominant passion may be alone its subject; but when it shall have been well overcome, though it still requires a particular attention to

[a] Cleobulus apud Diog. Laert. [b] Apud Laert. l. 8. [c] L. 3. De ira, c. 36.

watch and keep it under, and must be always continued a partial object of this examen, yet then some other virtue or vice may be joined with it; and this every year or month a new one. Did we but every year perfectly extirpate one vice, and acquire eminently one virtue, we should soon be saints, as a great author says.

8. In this particular examen, we must apply ourselves to consider only this passion, to discover its motions in us, to see its progress or abatements, better to penetrate its dangers and malice, and to renew ourselves daily in the resolution of entirely extirpating it. It is a profitable means, to enjoin ourselves some punishment upon a transgression, immediately or in our evening's examination. "I have seen true servants of God," says St. John Climacus, (gr. 16, n. 148,) "who having, on some particular occasion, omitted something of their regular austerity took immediately the generous resolution to pass the whole night standing, thus punishing themselves." P. 641. We must confess often the faults, which this passion shall cause us to commit. Thus we shall more seriously condemn them, and draw down upon ourselves more especial graces to surmount them, conceive a greater confusion of them, and be more upon our guard against them; we shall likewise by such frequent careful confessions acquire a singular purity of heart and conscience. We ought to practise every day some particular austerity against this passion. This will humble it, and awake our attention continually against it. We must frequently entertain ourselves with pious persons, or read or meditate on certain motives against it. This will make daily deeper impressions on our hearts, both of the love and earnest desire of the contrary virtue, and of the hatred, detestation, and horror of the vice. Experience will show us that our hearts will hence draw fresh ardour to extirpate it, that our souls will be filled therewith, and we be preserved ever watchful against any surprizes by it. In our ordinary meditations on other subjects we must be careful to draw, and dwell in particular on some affections and resolutions against this enemy. In all our prayers, at least at morning and night, at mass, and in frequenting the sacraments, we must remember most earnestly to beg of God this victory.

9. We must inform ourselves, by pious books, or from skilful directors, what are the means, both general and particular, by which this passion is to be overcome, and this virtue obtained; what are the dangers, occasions, and incentives of the former, and how they are to be avoided; what are the opportunities of practising the latter; what its acts, both interior, consisting in self-denials and ejaculations suiting our circumstances, and of which we must have a choice collection hoarded up in our breasts to use frequently; and exterior, consisting in outward exercises of this virtue, as of patience, humiliations, &c. Our resolutions of these particular means ought to be often renewed, as in our morning and evening prayers: without this precaution the best and strongest weaken by degrees. We must be very faithful in the execution of them all; for inconstancy and infidelity in them would not only make them fruitless; but produce in us a fickleness and incapacity of succeeding in any good. To avoid this danger, our resolutions must be such as are practicable, and not too much multiplied. "In case of relapses still into the same faults, it is a sign that man has not totally removed the first cause of his sins; says St. Basil, (Reg. brev. qu. 189.) "For, as if a man lop off only the branches of a tree, it will shoot again, because the root is not plucked up; so, whoever would preserve

himself from sin, must mount up to the first causes, and carefully remove them. Thus he, who contests and looks with envy on persons, whom he sees more esteemed than himself, must seek his remedy in humility, that he may no more fall a prey to passions, which arise from vain-glory."

10. Hence we see, that passions and temptations, if made a right use of, are a means of acquiring perfection in the contrary virtues. In overcoming pride, we learn true humility; we obtain chastity by triumphing over impurity; meekness by vanquishing anger; and so of other virtues. When God is pleased to call a soul to the eminent practice of some virtue, he chooses means worthy of himself and his divine invention, in which human prudence loses itself. He often permits temptations of the contrary vice, that by the victories over it he may inspire a soul with his favourite virtues in a more eminent degree of perfection, and make them take deeper root, and make greater impressions in her. Thus he manifested the glory of his Son by insults and contumelies, and was pleased to establish his church, and make it flourish by the blood of its children. We are then not to lose courage under temptations; but labour most strenuously to vanquish them by attaining the opposite virtues.

DISCOURSE XLVII.

ON SLOTH.

1. ALMIGHTY God is represented in the parable, (Mat. xi.) as the master of the vineyard, inviting all men to work in the same, and making them this reproach: "Why do you stand all the day idle?" These words are addressed to us, and are a reproach of our sloth, and an invitation to labour. We are bound to labour; this is an obligation, which we owe to God, to ourselves, and to the commonwealth of mankind. Almighty God laid it upon us by the condition of our creation, and by the law of penance. Even in the state of innocence, "God took man, and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it and to keep it." Gen. ii. 15. The employment allotted him was, without intermission, to praise his Creator as the angels in heaven do; and also to prune and dress the garden, which was his habitation. The earth indeed spontaneously yielded its fruits and flowers, and represented itself to man covered with all its riches; nevertheless he was commanded to prune and dress it. This labour was to him a pleasure, yet necessary; because he was created diligently to exercise both his mind and body in employments suiting his dignity, organs, and faculties.

2. This was the condition of man in his original state of innocence. Labour was then enjoined him as an occupation and a pleasure. Since his fall it is commanded him in a very different, and a much more severe manner, as a painful punishment. It is now the wages of sin no less than death is. No sooner had man sinned than he was condemned to sickness, to a thousand pains and fatigues, and to constant labour. God cursed the earth in his work, and pronounced this sentence upon him: "With labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life." And again, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth." Gen. iii.

17, 19. Here is no exception of state and condition. He does not say to some, you shall wet the earth with your sweats: and to others, you shall have nothing to do but to glut yourself with its dainties. Here is no distinction of birth or fortune. Sin is common to all; so likewise its punishment is extended to all. "Great labour is created for all men; and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of the womb of their mother until the day of their burial into the mother of all." Eccles. xi. 1. We must take notice, that this law of labour is for all men; this heavy yoke is laid on all the children of Adam; "from him, that sitteth on a throne of glory, unto him, that is humbled in earth and ashes; from him, that weareth the purple, even to him, that is covered with rough linen." Eccl. xl. 3, 4. Every man must say, "I am poor, and in labours from my youth." Ps. lxxxvii. 16. Not to labour is to rebel a second time against God. By the first rebellion man said: "I will not serve." Jer. ii. I will not obey. By the second he says, I will not undergo the sentence of God, and the punishment of my first disobedience.

3. Labour is a necessary duty of penance for all mankind to satisfy for past sins; but it is still more essential for the purpose of preserving us from sin.[a] Idleness made the Israelites in the wilderness fall into intemperance and criminal diversions. Exod. xxxii. 6. David was invincible in the exercises of war; but fell into adultery and murder by sloth at home. A heathen poet asking the question, why a man fell into adultery, answers himself, that the cause was clear, because he had abandoned himself first to sloth. Hence the Egyptian monks made labour a capital point in their penitential lives.[b] It was their maxim, as Cassian mentions, that a monk who exercised himself in labour, had only one devil to fight against; but that a slothful monk was tyrannised over by innumerable unclean spirits. Hence sloth is a most dangerous capital sin, and, as it is styled by fathers and divines, the mother of all vices; and it is the capital rule of a spiritual life; "Be always doing something, that the devil may always find you busy."

4. Idleness is likewise the destruction of all virtues; for it roots out of the heart their very seeds. St. Bonaventure compares sloth to a slow hectic fever, which imperceptibly drains all the vigour of the body, and leaves it without strength. Physicians lay down as a general principle, that distempers, which proceed from decay, are of all others the most fatal, and out of the reach of almost any remedies. So it is in the spiritual diseases of the soul; for softness enervates and destroys her courage and strength, without which she is incapable of exerting herself to practice any virtue; it dries up the very juice of virtue, and blasts all the good qualities of the mind. This vice is the more to be feared, because it makes its assaults insensibly, and is not perceived by those, over whom it tyrannizes. They say: What harm do we do? We neither swear, nor steal, nor injure others. The malice of this evil consists chiefly in omissions, on which account it is the more dangerous. For though it does not always appear like a firebrand in sin, its obscure indolence kindles a flame in the passions, which is not perceived till it be too late to be extinguished. Moreover, it is no less contemptible in the eyes of the world than it is

[a] Multam malitiam docuit otiositas. Eccl. xxxiii.

[b] Non propter corporis necessitatem, sed propter animæ salutem; says St. Jerom.

contrary to God and his grace. Even the world requires animation and courage in its votaries; and the slothful person is its refuse and outcast, left to putrify on his own dunghill, the abhorrence of heaven and earth, plunged in an insensible lethargy.

5. He is also a public nuisance, and an enemy to the commonwealth of mankind. All men are bound to contribute their part towards the maintenance and happiness of the community, as they receive their necessary succours from others. This the order of the universe and the laws of justice require. Providence has appointed different states as necessary in the world, but has allotted to each their employments, and left none idle. Those, who by the place, which they occupy in the world, are exempt from manual labour, have still many and weighty obligations and occupations; those, who have none by their circumstances, are obliged to choose for themselves such as are serious, useful, and suitable, and to employ themselves in them with great earnestness. Idleness in any state is an injury to God's providence, a deviating from his invariable law and rule, and a sin against his justice. It is an injustice to men; for by sloth a person becomes a useless burthen to the state. It is a maxim which allows no exemption, that, "If any one will not work, neither let him eat;" 2 Thess. iii. 10. Among the wise Egyptians idleness was regarded as a crime against the state, and punished with death. Amasis, one of the greatest kings of that country, appointed judges in every district for this only purpose; before whom all the inhabitants were obliged to appear from time to time to give an account of their work, and of their whole family, and how they employed their whole time. Whoever was found not to have been diligent, was put to death as an unprofitable and burdensome member of the commonwealth, as Herodotus relates. The laws of Lycurgus for the Lacedemonians were not less positive in this point.[a] And those of Draco and Solon ordered all persons guilty of sloth to be prosecuted before the magistrate, and if convicted to be put to death. The kings of Egypt obliged the governors of each province to be always carrying on some public work, in which all hands might be employed. Hence the stupendous canals and other great works, with which that country was filled. The Romans, till they degenerated from their severe virtue into sloth, luxury, and all sorts of vice, upon the same principle always kept the soldiery and people busy. Even in the provinces, if the troops rested from war, they were constantly occupied together with the people in hard labour, as in digging great canals, or in making high-ways, which for solidity and stateliness were the wonders of the world, and their remains continue so to this day. They paved upon deep foundations, which so many ages have not shaken, not only all the roads of Italy, but also those throughout all the provinces of their empire; by which means they established commerce and the free intercourse of nations, and civilized the western world. Even in the remotest provinces this system was adhered to: we find 7700 Roman miles paved by them in Spain, and above 2570 in Britain.[b]

6. The sin of sloth is committed many ways. The most grievous is perfect sloth in spiritual things, by which a man is sorry for, or conceives a wilful loathing of virtue and divine charity, on account of the labour

[a] Histoire critique de la pauvrete, par M. Maxim. Mem. de literature, t. 7, an. 1717.
[b] See Bergier, Histoire des grands chemins de l'Empire Romain.

and difficulty in attaining it. As if a man, on account of the trouble of resisting temptations, should wish that there were no God, or that he himself had been a brute beast without a rational soul, or had never been baptized or known the christian religion. This belongs to the most grievous of all sins, the hatred of God, and of his grace and charity in us. It is also the sin of spiritual sloth, if a person out of tepidity be sorry that he has embraced a state of perfection; or if one fall into despair, lukewarmness, wilful distractions, omission of prayer, or neglect of any spiritual duties. Alas! how slothful does the spirit of the world render us in the service of God? Prayer, the preparation to the sacraments, all spiritual duties often seem tedious to christians, because they want fervour and courage, by which the saints found those exercises most sweet. "The slothful man saith: There is a lion without; I shall be slain in the streets." Prov. xxii. 13. "There is a lion in the way, and a lioness in the roads." Prov. xxvi. 13. He dares not stir to practise virtue, lest he be devoured. What are those lions and lionesses, which he represents to himself in the service of God? They are austerity, labour, holy prayer. The cross of Christ appears a furious lion to the tepid soul; she says, her shoulders are not able to bear it. But the labour of virtue and the mortification of our passions are not terrible to true courage and love; these find them sweet. But suppose the paths of virtue every where filled with lions; are not those of vice beset with others far more furious? The ambitious, voluptuous, the worldly man suffers longer watchings, undergoes far greater mortifications, and devours more affronts in the service of the devil, than a mortified recluse does for God in his cell. One half of such pains and trouble, suffered for the cause of virtue, would have made them saints, and procured them a crown equal to that of the martyrs.

7. Add to their labour of vice the tumult of restless passions tearing the breast asunder; the remorse of guilt, the anxiety, fears, disappointments, and rage, which possess the soul of the unhappy worldling; and still more the eternal misery, that awaits him after this momentary life. Ah! "They that fear the hoary frost, the snow shall fall upon them." Job. vi. 16. The prophet Amos says, that "he who flees from the face of a lion, shall fall upon a bear; and the slothful man resembles one that leans against a wall, while a serpent issues out of it, and bites him," v. 19. Do but wrestle against this lion of sloth, till you have torn him to pieces, like Sampson, by a vigorous resolution and mortification; and you shall find in him a cake of honey, or a heavenly sweetness, which will encourage you to pursue your journey. Courage will show, that the temptation is no more than the shadow and mere fear of an imaginary phantom, which disappears when courageously attacked. Whence David mentions this temptation by the name not of any thing real, but of nocturnal fears.

8. The second sin of sloth is that, by which a man neglects the duties of his calling. It is a strict obligation for every one, that he be very diligent in employing himself in his profession. It is God who hath placed him in it; he must therefore take care never to look upon it as troublesome, painful, or tedious; but must consider it as an exercise given him by God, with a precept that he employ himself faithfully therein, as a necessary means of salvation, and a duty which he owes to God, to himself, and his family, and to the commonwealth of the world. He cannot neglect it without a grievous sin, and an injustice. Idleness is particularly criminal and dangerous in young persons. By it they become for ever incapable

of serious application to any thing; their soul is overrun with the briars of vices; as land, which is not tilled, brings forth weeds and thorns. Moreover, they neglect the means of rendering themselves afterwards capable of business, and the consequence of their neglect is, that their whole life will be slothful and unprofitable. Especially an idle student loses time and opportunities never to be repaired; and if he afterwards follow a profession, for which he is not qualified, as that of the law or physic, or of serving the church, he lives in habits of sin, till by study he has qualified himself for those professions, and is bound to restitution for all the injustices and evils, of which his ignorance has been the cause. Such persons by neglecting their studies lose the most precious time of their lives, which they can never repair, and neglect to qualify themselves to promote the divine honour according to their station. And, what is worst of all, by disobedience and habits of sloth they lay the foundation not only of an unprofitable and obscure, but also of a vicious life.

9. The sin of idleness is committed, if a man neglect his business, though he apply himself to other occupations. It is one kind of idleness, called indolence, for a man to have no serious employment; but it is another kind of idleness, when one neglects his own business to run after other employments, merely because he will not bear the labour of his own. Sloth makes every thing tedious to a man; he therefore, seeks to relieve himself by changing his employment; but is soon sick of the second, because he has not courage to follow any in earnest. According to the old Roman proverb, the ox under the yoke wishes to carry the saddle, and the horse would fain drag the plough. Every one is bound closely to stick to his profession, unless prudence and a greater virtue direct him to choose another; whatever draws him from attending to it is a dangerous temptation, and must be rejected as such, howsoever it may disguise itself.

10. There is no state or profession privileged with any exemption from this law. The king is but the first servant of the commonwealth. What then shall we say of those, who seem to think amusement and pleasure a privilege of their rank? How many men look upon themselves as if they were created only to enjoy the world, and who spend all their time in frivolous amusements, in idle conversation, in pleasures, or in tedious sloth? Persons called christians, live only for diversion and play. Women, who profess the religion of Jesus Christ, are wholly taken up with their own persons, seem scarcely to have any other occupation than to consult their looking-glass, to study new fashions, to adorn and set off their carcase, scrupulously to pay a hundred superfluous visits, and to exact as many more from others. Yet there are some, who pretend to join this slothful life with devotion and piety. But do riches or quality exempt christians from the obligations and maxims of the gospel, from the condition of sinners, from the common sentence passed by God upon all mankind? What does religion pronounce of such persons? They receive only the good things of this world, and live continually drunk with its false pleasures. What then are they to expect but the punishment of the rich glutton in hell? His life is not represented as otherwise criminal than by sloth and jollities. He was richly clad, he feasted daintily, and he enjoyed his plenty. Is not this, which was his damnation, the very description of thousands in the world?

11. Reason itself points out to us the obligation of labour. God has given us a mind capable of the most excellent improvement. What is the

difference between an Indian savage and a virtuous and learned Roman? The former appears scarcely superior to the apes and baboons of his woods; the latter exerts all the graces and elegance of his noble soul. This infinite difference is the effect of culture. God designed in our creation, that we should arrive at the perfection of our nature; for the perfection of his works was certainly his view; yet his providence has rendered us capable of it only by industry, that he might oblige us on this account to assiduous labour in the cultivation of our souls. By this means we improve our memory and understanding, and acquire the treasure of every valuable knowledge. Again, virtue, the greatest excellence of which we could be made capable, is only the fruit of our victories over ourselves and our passions, and lays us under the most indispensable necessity of constant labour and watchfulness. The vigour and health of our bodies are not to be preserved but by daily exercise. The common exigencies of the world, all the circumstances of our private state, and every thing about us point out to us the absolute necessity of applying ourselves to labour. Much more does faith teach us this truth, that being all criminals we are sentenced to this doom;[a] and that God has promised heaven only to labour. By this condition we prove ourselves heirs to the heavenly inheritance: if we plead an exemption, we choose hell for our portion.

12. By labour we are to understand some serious useful employment and exercise of body or mind. If persons have no such occupation, by the necessity of their circumstances, for procuring a livelihood, nor by the state in which providence has placed them, they are bound to choose one for themselves, which may be suitable to their rank, and may fill their vacant hours. Thus they will shun the crime of idleness with its most pernicious evil consequences; if they do this in a spirit of humility and penance, they will make it a great means of their sanctification, and will escape the anxious tortures of the mind, melancholy and spleen, and the tedious burden of sloth, by which a man is tiresome to himself, and even rest and pleasures become dull and without relish to him. Before the simplicity of the first ages was entirely worn away, and luxury banished its last remains, persons of the highest rank were always occupied. In Homer the queens are always found at their loom, or with the spindle; as Helen weaving the siege of Troy, of which she was the cause. Iliad, (l. v. 125, 126.) Pope, (b. 3, v. 169, 170.) Andromache the wife of Hector, Chryseis, &c., used to be similarly occupied. Among the Romans we find Dictators and Censors hastening from their public employments to steer the plough. Augustus wore no clothes but what were wove by his mother or wife.

13. Recreation is sometimes necessary. The body requires rest, and the mind intervals of relaxation. Apollo did not keep his bow always bent. But every one ought first, to have regular hours for his serious and useful occupations both of devotion and labour, and only allow a small portion to recreation. Secondly, He must rise early, and as soon as he is awake. This is an important advice against sloth. "As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed." Prov. xxvi. 14. A philosopher finding, that the emperor Vespasian rose very early, from this sign alone judged him worthy to govern the world. Thirdly, It is necessary to be earnest in all we do, never lazy and listless.[b] Not like the

[a] Homo nascitur ad laborem, sicut avis ad volatum. Job. v. 7.
[b] Esto velox in omnibus operibus tuis. Eccl. xxxi.

slothful man, whom the Wise-man describes, as grieving to turn his hand to his mouth. Prov. xxvi. 15. Fourthly, We must regulate our conversation, that it do not consume idly our precious time; we must shun that which is superfluous, and choose that which is the more serious and profitable; we must allow to it only what charity or necessary relaxation requires.

14. But the most necessary advice is, that we set due bounds to, and regulate well our recreations; we must avoid those, which are dangerous or evil. In the first ages, dice, cards, or games of hazard were not so much as known; or any such pastimes as fatigue the mind instead of relaxing it. Their diversions consisted in bodily and manly exercises. Such as are sedentary may be allowed within just bounds, to prevent occasions of idle words and detraction. But what can be more dull or unworthy of a rational being, than to hang for half a day over a pack of cards, more stupifying than the most abstract studies? What account will such a person be able to give of his time at the bar of the Supreme Judge on the last day; nay what would he have answered at the assizes of an Egyptian or Spartan magistrate? All recreation becomes criminal, if it be made an occupation, or immoderate, or pursued with passion.

15. Games of Hazard are unjust, and condemed both by the law of nature and by all positive laws. No man can justly expose to chance what is necessary for his affairs or family, or which, if it be superfluous to them, he ought to give to the poor. Nor can he lawfully win from another what he cannot justly rob himself or the poor of, especially by games of hazard. Hence gaming is of its own nature unlawful; first, because unjust in itself. Secondly, Because it always springs from covetousness. For to seek gain more than recreation even from any lawful play is always unlawful, and a degree of covetousness; much more so by games of hazard, always unjust in themselves, if any considerable sum is risked by them. Thirdly, It is an immediate and violent occasion of many most grievous passions and crimes, as of anger, envy, rage, contumelies, quarrels, loss of time and of fortune, despair, swearing, blasphemy, &c. Aristosle, (l. 4, Ethic. c. 1,) ranks gamesters with highwaymen and robbers, and says that they are worse in this respect, that they acquire their plunder from friends. St. Bernardin of Sienna, (Serm. 33, in domin. 4,) says, that gamesters are worse than thieves, and that he would rather live on the money of public robbers. St. Antoninus, (2 part. tit. 1, c. 23,) writes still more severely against them, and proves that, even though they should play fairly according to the conventions and laws of the game, they, and all who look on, sin most grievously. The law of nature obliges those, that win, to restitution, if they have won from persons, who could not alienate large sums, such as minors, wives, or men, whose losses on such occasions would bring distress on themselves or their families. In these cases not only games of hazard; but also those, in which industry and art are predominant, are unjust. Add, the passion of gaming is so violent, that it hurries men into the greatest extremities. Tacitus, (l. de moribus Germanorum,) mentions, that the ancient Germans were fond of dice to such a degree of extravagance and fury, that, when they had lost every thing else, they staked on the last desperate throw their own liberty and their bodies. Those who play for immoderate sums at lawful games, incur the guilt of gaming. Divines teach, that winners are to be exhorted to give their gains to the poor.

DISCOURSE XLVIII.

ON CONVERSATION.

ENTERING into conversation, it is necessary to arm ourselves against danger by a firm resolution against our most usual failings in it, and a fervent aspiration to God for his succour, in a true sense of our own weakness, and also by taking a short foresight or consideration before we speak. This is Solomon's precept, when he tells us: "It is man's part to prepare the soul, but the Lord's to govern the tongue." Prov. xvi. 1. This stirring up ourselves to such a fear, watchfulness, and circumspection will restrain within our souls that rash vanity and inconsiderate presumption and folly, with which most persons enter into discourse. The check we have upon our minds will prevent our giving a mad loose to our tongue, and will obtain from God the grace to govern it. This was the practice of the great king David: "I have said, I will watch my ways that I offend not in my tongue. I have set a guard upon my mouth." Ps. xxxviii. 1. This sentiment of fear is to be often renewed during the discourse, and, especially in case of worldly profane conversation, the mind must be often raised to God by some fervent ejaculations, thus to feed on its own invisible food, as the angel did in Tobias's company on earth, and preserve itself from too great dissipation.

The company of the servants of God is to be principally sought, from whose very silence the heart will always treasure up something, and the understanding receive some new light and improvement. When charity or necessity engages a person in worldly conversation, that of profane, scurrilous, wicked, or idle discourses must be shunned with all possible care, and such discourse modestly and genteely broken off by a sadness or severity of countenance, expressing a displeasure at it, or by some other topic to be carefully brought forward. Reflections, thoughts, and sentiments are the food of the soul; we must then, be careful that these be virtuous, just, prudent, and good; for the mind will be such as is the nourishment, upon which it feeds; if we suffer it to be puffed up with empty wind, it will of course become itself light, airy, empty, profane, and whatever is bad. We are solicitous to nourish our bodies with solid wholesome meats; how much more ought we to be so for our souls? After conversation we ought to recollect ourselves a little in the closet of our hearts with God, to recover our dissipated spirits, and to call ourselves to consider in what we have failed, by a moment's general reflection on our discourse, arming ourselves with proper resolutions against the like. Job himself followed this method: "I have spoken one thing, which I wish I had not said, and another to which I shall add no more." Job xxxix. 35.

To lay down some general rules for conversation, we must remember the first is that precept, which is in every one's mouth, though so rarely practised, viz. that the tongue do never run before the mind, which the Holy Ghost so often repeats by the mouth of the Wise-man: "Never speak any word rashly." Eccl. v. 1. "Be not hasty in thy tongue." Eccl. iv. 34. "The words of prudent men shall be weighed in scales. The heart of fools is in their mouth; and the mouth of the wise is in their heart." Eccl. xxi. 28, 29. To speak much and always circumspectly is

a very extraordinary gift; but to speak fast, to justle as it were for the word, and to pour out one's thoughts in a hurry, is sure to be done without consideration. This makes a man vent all he has in his heart, or a great deal which he ought to conceal there. It also makes their meaning and embryos of half-conceived thoughts be covered under such a multiplicity of words as to be unintelligible to others; and what wonder, whilst they do not give themselves time to understand themselves, or to take a review of their thoughts or words?

Alas! Did we consider what misfortunes we incur, what perplexities we draw upon ourselves, what proofs of our own vanity and folly we give, how burdensome we make ourselves to others by usurping as it were the monopoly of discourse, and how many evils we might spare ourselves, only by being more sparing and reserved in our words, we should never fall into this fault. Were we but to consult that vanity itself, which makes us so talkative, it would suffice to show us our error; for we lose the esteem of men by the very means by which we court it. We discover to them the detestable vanity and self-conceit of our own hearts; we show our pride in thinking all our thonghts wise, and looking upon our words as oracles, deserving the whole attention of others. What can be more tyrannical or more odious in society? What can more degrade us in the opinion of others? It is not a pedantic parade of reading or of languages; but the justness and precision of what little we say, that will gain the reputation of true learning. Nor is it the multiplicity of words, but the choice of a few short thoughts and words, that will make us appear wise. Even in their silence, men of few words will be supposed to conceal great knowledge on every subject of discourse. Every one will admire their words, and be impatient to hear them open their mouths again, as Job testifies of his own reserved silence in his court: "They expected me as rain, and they opened their mouths as to an evening shower." Job xxiv. 23. The talkative fool blunders out all that he knows, and all that he does not know, with many impertinencies and mistakes. Modesty particularly forbids young persons, especially of the female sex, to be forward in speaking before their elders or betters; nor should any one answer before he has heard the whole question, or any ways interrupt or break in upon another's discourse, and the like; which rules belong to virtue still more than to good manners. "He who answers before he hears shows himself a fool, and worthy of confusion." Prov. xviii. 13. "Do not answer a word before thou hearest; and do not add to speak in the midst of discourse." Eccl. xx. 6. As we expect attention and respect, so it is just we should show it to others. "Hear silent, and for thy respect thou shalt receive good grace." Eccl. xxxii. 9. "O young man, scarce speak in thy own cause. If thou shouldst be twice asked, let thy head keep thy answer." Eccl. xxxii. 10, 11.

If we find ourselves seized with an itch of talking, and labour under that distemper of him, who, big with his own thoughts, and impatient to give them vent, said: "Who can hold in a conceived speech?" Job iv. 2, we then lie under a particular necessity of often mortifying and curbing this passion, that we may subdue it, (as e. g.) by frequently suppressing what we know, and what even might be well spoken. The humility and self-denial of this practice will be a great sacrifice and victory, and of infinite service to us under real temptations of vices of the tongue. To obtain the gift of governing it we must also practice frequent recollection

and solitude, and on proper occasions imitate the silence of our blessed Redeemer in his passion; as when we are attacked by slanders or contumelies, which God's honour does not oblige us to confute. There are certain places and times of silence, as in the church, in the presence of our superiors, when going to prayer, when retiring to bed, in a spiritual retreat, &c.

St. Gregory the great observes, (Mor. l. 7, c. 17,) that, as there is a season for silence, so there are many times for speaking, in which silence would be criminal. We are bound to speak, when the stopping of some evil, the removing of scandal, the edification of others, and God's honour require it. It is also necessary sometimes to unbend our mind, and give it a respite and breathing from too serious application, to which something of innocent conversation is very conducive. We likewise may owe it, out of charity or civility, to others. But we must be very careful, that it be never dangerous, never too long nor too frequent, nor ever without that extreme circumspection, which the great dangers attending this duty require. "Be ye holy in all conversation." 1 Peter i. 15. "Let your modesty be known to all men." Phil. iv. 5.

Visits are an act of charity, if the motive be good. They must not however be too frequent, long, or worldly, but sanctified by charity, gravity, modesty, and edifying behaviour. Priests charged with the care of souls ought to visit their flocks, One visit of a pastor will sometimes settle a divided family in perpetual peace, and remedy infinite disorders. He will comfort the afflicted, &c. He will thus learn the necessities of his flock; (e. g.) that many irregularities prevail; that parents are careless, children disobedient; heads of families harsh to their servants, &c.; that a person, who in his confession seems an angel, is a lion in his own house. By visits we edify and comfort one another, maintain peace, union, and charity together, and mutually excite to virtue, and awaken in each other the spirit of faith. Hence St. Paul said to the Romans: "For I long to see you, &c." Rom. i. 11, 12.

Yet visits are sources of great abuses. They must be rare. "Rarus sit egressus in publicum," says St. Jerom ep. 22, ad Eustoch. And St. Basil writes to St. Gregory Nazianzen, (e. p. 1,) "I have renounced city conversations, as the occasions of innumerable evils." A priest must indeed visit those, who stand in need of his presence, as Christ did Zacheus. Luc. xix. 5. It is a necessary caution, even for ecclesiastics, to pray before and after visits. See St. Jerom ep. 22, ad Eustoch.

Our conduct on these occasions must be suitable to the quality of the company, the time, place, subject, and other circumstances of the conversation, in which an unfeigned humility, charity, and respect for our neighbours will be our only sure guides, as they will teach us every necessary decorum, and guard us from whatever might be offensive to our neighbour, or prejudicial to ourselves.

All formality and preciseness, all stiffness, any thing forced or affected is very opposite to the rules both of virtue or good breeding.

It is said for excuse; such a fault in conversation is but a small one. But the smallest sins are the devil's greatest stratagems. The finer the line is, the more easily and the deeper the hook is swallowed. Again, sins of the tongue are usually habitual; consequently all very great. For, as Plato said: "If the matter be small, still custom is never so."

Affectation is as odious to others as it is painful to the person himself.

The good qualities appear by it foreign to him, not his true character, but an artful constraint. It also shows, that he seeks the reputation of possessing them. But he, who publishes his own excellencies, even when real, spoils them by his ridiculous ostentation. A good man will never appear persuaded of his own merit, and will do nothing to convince others of it; the less he seems solicitous that others should see it, the more will every one discover it real. Whatever seems studied, will be judged counterfeit, and not sincere. Hence every eminent quality loses its effect and esteem amongst men by affectation. But a man must take care to show nothing studied or affected even in endeavouring to avoid affectation.

A decent freedom is the soul of good conversation. In the time of cheerfulness we must remember always to be cheerful. "Let the heart of those that seek the Lord rejoice." Ps. civ. 3. By stiffness, moroseness, or sadness we would make ourselves burdensome to others, and perhaps indicate that their company was so to us. It would destroy every good end of conversation, and change it into constraint and torment. An agreeable cheerfulness in discourse is reckoned by the philosophers among the moral virtues, and called by them with Aristotle, (l. 4, eth. c. 14,) Eutrapelia. But, as on the one side it shuns unseasonable moroseness, so on the other it commands a christian gravity and decency, condemning not only profane or loose jests, but also all the facetious turns of wit or raillery, which go beyond the bounds of true gravity, or tend to immoderate mirth or laughter, which is condemned by St. Paul as impertinent scurrility; Eph. v. 4. See St. Jerom and St. Chrysostom, (Hom. 17, in Ephes.) upon that passage. Just raillery is sometimes used by the saints. See 3 Kings xviii. 27. Isa. xiv. 9, 10, 11, 12, &c. But a habit of making a jest of others, though with ever so constant a flow of humour, cannot but always be blameable, as its frequency must be criminal; nor is it possible, that it should not often, nay generally, transgress the bounds of virtue, and trespass both upon charity and justice. The art of true raillery requires, that it be done in so inoffensive a manner as to please even the person himself, who is the object of it; it ought to appear in so genteel a manner as to carry with it rather a sort of praise for some commendable quality, and only touch very softly on the defect or fault, which is its subject. The notorious enormity of an offence, and the authority of the person reprehending, may indeed in some cases allow a severer sting; but no contempt of any person, though ever so mean, or ever so criminal, can be excusable, or will be pardoned; as every man both has and thinks he has a right not to be made the object of any one's disdain. It is the inviolable rule of conversation, never to make any one of the company uneasy. What a barbarous cruelty is it to divert the company at the expense or with the blush of any of those who compose it? And he, who now sports with one man, threatens all the rest in their turns; as every man has his weaknesses.[a] Who can be cheerful where his least inadvertencies are to be exposed by the art of real or pretended wit to immoderate ridicule and laughter? If we pardon others' imperfections in discourse, we may hope to meet ourselves with the same indulgence. This mutual condescension is the soul of true concord and freedom.

The wretched art of punning, at least as generally managed, falls under the same censure; and the punster most frequently puts a slur upon his

[a] Omnibus minatur qui facit uni injuriam.—Hor. l. 1, Sat. 3.

own wit, where he pretends the most to set it off. Likewise a perpetual humour of drollery and buffoonery is a thing far beneath the gravity of a christian, and even of a man, and lets him down below the dignity of a rational creature. Moderate laughter or rather smiling is sometimes allowable and decent, but never to excess, which very much empties the heart and offends against true modesty. Nor ought a man ever to laugh first at his own story, or at all at his own jest.

The opposite vice, no less to be shunned, is a sour temper, that is offended at every thing that is pleasant, or that has the appearance of a jest. Charity is pliant to all humours in indifferent things, yet without a deference, which is servile, mean, or unjust. We must show to others all respect in addressing modestly our discourse to them, and in never interrupting theirs, but listening to them with every due regard to the quality, judgment, age, &c., maintaining our own character with suitable dignity and majesty, without demeaning ourselves by any baseness. Nor must any unsettledness in our looks betray the least uneasiness in our minds, or any action transgress a strict modesty. Too great ceremoniousness is very contrary to the freedom of conversation, and even to good manners. Men of that cast make it an art to torture themselves and others.

Fawning or flattery is a pernicious fault, and a base meanness of soul. It is the weakness of many to be delighted with it, as self-conceit makes them think their own praises just. But this can be the effect only of blind pride, and exposes them to the ridicule and scorn even of their very flatterers themselves, and to many great misfortunes both temporal and spiritual, making them enemies to the true knowledge of themselves and their real interest, and the dupes of designing parasites. This is especially the pest of courts. By often hearing their own praises men cannot but begin to think too well of themselves, and look upon commendation as an incense due to all their actions. The most interested and base of mortals, discovering their foibles make use of it to wriggle themselves into their favour, and to abuse their credulity for the most unjust and iniquitous purposes. To shut out these passions from the heart, and secure himself from such snares, every one, but especially princes and all great men, ought to look upon as an insult all praises given them to their faces. Both their interest and their reputation oblige them to this, as well as religion. The flatterer proclaims their weakness and pride; for he could never presume to approach them except under the cover of these imperfections; and neither modesty nor humility should suffer any one to listen to such adulatory impertinence. Vanity indeed might be base enough to be delighted with its own applause, were it not given to its face; but to admit this is for it openly to unmask itself to its own confusion. The Emperor Sigismund, hearing a nobleman flatter him, was not able to contain his passion, but gave him a blow on the face, saying it was the greatest affront he had ever received. "The wounds of a friend are better than the deceitful kiss of an enemy." Prov. xxvii. 6.

The flatterer is more base and criminal than he who listens to him, and offers him a real insult, by entertaining a very bad opinion of his friend's judgment and modesty; and this even if he think his praises the most just; how much more is he so, if his flatteries are false, or perhaps, impious; and if his designs are interested and selfish, as is commonly the case? And every flatterer will be ordinarily presumed to have such views; for, unless influenced by base principles, he would never transgress

the rules of modesty so far as to praise a person to his face, and throw such a temptation before him. Plainness and sincerity are the character of a christian and of every honest man. A pure compliment and a simple approbation of what is well done are far from falling under the name of flattery.

Nothing shows a greater servility and abjectness of soul; nothing is a greater mark of a disingenuous heart than to flatter. The heathens looked upon this vice as much below the liberty of a free man as beneath the probity of an honest man.

A critical disposition, which delights to carp at or censure others, and can bear no opinions contrary to its own, or approve of no conduct which squares not with its notions, is a daughter of pride, and a capital pest of society. A love of truth must always guard us against the mistakes and errors of others; but the greater part of our knowledge is but probability. Here, especially in matters of small or no consequence, we are to allow others their own judgment and way of thinking, as we desire leave to follow ours. It is an intolerable pride to pretend ours infallible, or to be too confident in it, or to desire to make it a law to others. It is the greatest tyranny to usurp such an unreasonable and imperious jurisdiction over other men's judgments; a thing, in which above all they are most essentially free, and in which we have no authority over them. How provoking and intolerable also must it be to them, to see themselves highly undervalued in that very quality which is man's chief excellence and pride? Truth indeed is ever a most valuable good, and the mutual improvement of our minds in it is one of the main advantages of speech. Mistakes and errors often occur in points the most important, in which even justice and charity oblige us to defend the cause of truth. But when we are bound to contradict even the most impertinent babblers, at least if they are our superiors or strangers, we must do it in a respectful manner, and, if possible, with so much art, that, whilst we oppose false reasonings with freedom, and do not by complaisance betray the truth, yet we inform and correct the erroneous in so obliging a manner, as to do it without giving the uneasiness, or even showing any direct appearance of a correction. This talent, though it takes its rise from an unfeigned humility and charity of heart, yet requires a nice judgment, prudence, a knowledge of men, and a discrimination of tempers and persons. The duty of fraternal correction has been considered elsewhere.

An itch to dispute and wrangle in conversation is another still more dangerous daughter of pride, and the source of quarrels and many other evils. "Refrain from contention, and you will diminish sin;" says the Holy Ghost Eccl. xxviii. 10. And the Apostle, "Avoid foolish and unlearned questions, for they beget strifes," 2 Tim., ii. 23. And again, "Let nothing be done through contention, neither by vain-glory; but in humility let each esteem others better than themselves." Phil, ii. 3, Those, who are possessed with a spirit of contradiction, must be deeply possessed with the spirit of pride, which makes them trample upon good manners and charity. "Be not contentious, lest all improbity dwell in thee," says Abbot Isaias, Hom. orat. 8, t. 3, Bibl. 187. Those, who are warm or loud in disputes, give marks of a haughty self-opinionated mind, which cannot brook that their sentiments should be contradicted: they drown reason in noise, and, losing the command of their temper, blind their understanding, are precipitate and inconsiderate in their words,

throw themselves into much nonsense and blasphemy, give their adversary the greatest advantages over them, and betray their pride and the impotency of their mind. Only a cool sedate canvassing or discoursing upon matters can be the true way of either searching for or giving any information. But why should the search of truth be mentioned as the end of disputes? It is indeed always pretended to be so; but men ordinarily show, both by their manner of commencing, and that in which they carry them on, that it is victory which they propose to themselves, not the truth, and that they love their opinions, not so much because they think them true, as because they are their own. Why then do men generally engage in disputes? out of pride, not to seem to give up their point, though perhaps, of no moment; or to make a vain parade of their talents, though they really only display their folly. "It is an honour to the man, who removes himself from contention; but fools are entangled in contumelies." Prov. xx. 3.

Nor is the system of disputing ever likely to draw others over to truth or to our opinion. All created good has some mixture of imperfection; and most truths have some sides obscure and open to cavil; thus every thing has several sides, on which it may be considered in different lights. Therefore, most topics leave always room for pro and con. We can seldom hope to reduce an antagonist so far that he will not still find something to say, though he be puzzled ever so much. As long therefore, as natural pride opposes his opening his eyes to conviction, so long will he still hold out against it, and refuse to acknowledge himself vanquished. When we enter into a debate, what else do we do than set up a mark for victory? The combatants grow harder to be conquered as the strife grows fiercer, and the more closely either seems pressed, the more eager does he become to defend himself. Thus this method of seeking truth may be styled the art of eternal wrangling. Disputes in the classes are necessary to animate students, enlarge their understanding, and promote learning. But scholars should never enter into them except previously well guarded against all vanity, contention, and other dangers, to which they are too often exposed; and on other occasions, unless some necessity may create such as are of importance, they are to be shunned as pernicious and useless. St. Paul's advice was, even in religious matters, "Contend not in words; for it is to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." 2 Tim. ii. 14. Should we overpower, or confute a man ever so evidently, could we hope to make him a proselyte, by raising his pride and every disposition in his heart to oppose conviction? What conquest of the heart was ever made by disgusting it? It must then be our inviolable rule to abhor contentiousness, and shun the company of persons, who are infected with that evil; secondly, never to contradict or dispute in matters not essential. "Never contend about what does not concern or affect thee." Eccl. x. 8. Thirdly, it is better to suffer a little than to endanger charity, or our own or others peace of mind. "If a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him." Mat. v. 40. Fourthly, under a necessity of defending the truth, let the dispute be managed with so much coolness, temper, politeness, candor, charity, deference, and respect, without the least heat, precipitation, insult, or contempt, that it have not the air of a dispute, and may never distract our own mind and disturb its peace, or ruffle or discompose our adversary, but sooth and gain his heart still more if possi-

ble, whilst it convinces and satisfies his understanding; for the one can never be gained, while the other is too vehemently roused. "He who in conversation would too vehemently push his opinion, though it be the truth, ought to know that he is seized with the distemper of the devil, which is pride. If it be with his equals that he commits this fault, he may cure himself by correction; but if he forget himself so far as to commit it against his elders, the evil is incurable by human means. He, who is not submissive and obedient in words, will never be so in actions. Such a one labours in vain in virtue, and receives from obedience only his own condemnation." St. John Climacus, Gr. 4.

Confidence is another daughter of self-conceit; for it is the self-opinionated mind that makes the coxcomb, though its characters are legible in the countenance and exterior actions. It is by this extravagance in overrating himself, that a man becomes forward in business, assuming and peremptory in discourse, positive in every thing, and that he thinks himself out of the possibility of mistake. This assurance often meets with applause from the ignorant; but is seen through and despised by men of judgment, and lowers the man in the opinion of society, and still more in the character of virtue. The simplicity of our holy religion commands that our discourse be yea, yea, no, no, without further assurance or asseverations, which can only make the hearers doubt of the candour of the speaker.

It is a part of this fault to deal much in superlatives, or in universal propositions; to make every thing a man censures, most intolerable, equalling the pride of Lucifer, or the like; and whatever he commends, infinitely charming, unparalleled, most heavenly, rapturous, &c. Modesty is very reserved in her expressions, to keep herself within the bounds of strict truth and naked simplicity. St. Ignatius scarcely ever used superlatives; his discourse was simple and free from all exaggeration. Nor did he assert very positively what he knew with great certainty. Positiveness is an enemy to control, and consequently to granting every one the freedom of discourse. Universal propositions are seldom true. A just logician is very reserved in advancing any, because very few, even in sciences, are true in metaphysical strictness; and he, who values his word, ought to be sparing and cautious in using any such in common discourse, because in common life few of them are exact even taken in a moral latitude; and they, who easily use them, will often go too far.

It is a glaring and odious fault for a man to boast of himself. "Let another praise thee, not thyself; a stranger, and not thy own lips." Prov. xxvii. 2. Here vanity not only offends God; but man also, and grossly mistakes its aim; for whoever makes himself the trumpeter of his own praises, hereby loses the value even of the greatest actions, and tarnishes his own glory in the eyes of men. He likewise blasts all his virtues before God, and deprives himself of their fruit. Hence old Tobias says: "Never suffer pride to reign in thy discourse." Tob. iv. 14. As we are to be modest and humble in our hearts, so likewise should we be in our words. Hence it is the advice, not only of the saints, but even of the heathen philosophers that a man should avoid all discourse about himself and his own concerns, as it usually proceeds from and nourishes pride and self-love, and also is tedious and offensive to others, as Pliny observes, (B. 1, ep. 8.) "Neither commend nor discommend yourself," was a maxim of Cato. Confucius and Aristotle had laid down the same rule, adding that the first

is open vanity, and the second an excess of humility, always suspected to include a secret vanity; and therefore, both insupportable to the hearers, and indicating folly and presumption. Hence a man, who talks not only of himself; but of what belongs to him, as of his family, ancestors, estates, profession, offends against modesty and good manners; if he speak of them through necessity, let it be modestly, briefly, and avoiding, if possible, the use of the first person, than which nothing can be more fulsome or odious. All egotisms must be banished.

He, who any other ways expresses an esteem of himself or of his own words, is justly punished with universal contempt; as if he stun his hearers by the loudness of his voice, or by an assuming tone, or by casting his eyes about on his hearers to observe their applause, which by those gestures he gives first to himself; and as if he said on every word of his: "O the fine expression! the wisdom, &c." The hearers read in his countenance and in his accent what he says in his heart, and repays his folly with that disdain, which is due to it.

It is likewise a rule of prudence to speak little of others or their concerns; for such conversation is apt to lead to detractions, affronts, and many sins against charity. When any mention of other persons occurs, let this maxim be remembered, that nothing be said of them which one would conceal from them. This must be more strictly observed with regard to superiors, princes, &c. "Detract not the king in the very thought, and speak not ill of the rich in the private chamber, because the birds of heaven will carry thy voice, and he who has wings will tell thy words." Eccl. x. 20. Be not too lavish even in praising others; it might hurt them, and offend the hearers: men are naturally enemies to it.

The utmost watchfulness over ourselves is necessary, that we never commit to any one whomsoever the least secret concerning others. St. Ambrose testifies, that, though his dear and holy brother Satyrus had lived in the greatest mutual confidence with him, and all things else were common, yet one thing was always excepted; for they had never trusted one another with the least secret of others. Those, who love to talk much, are easily betrayed into this crime. "The fool is in labour with the word; as the cry of a woman in child-bed to be delivered. As a dart fixed in the thigh," which the man is in continual pain to draw out of that tender part, "so is a word in the heart of a fool." Eccl. xix. 11. What can be baser than to betray a friend and the confidence he has placed in a man, and to act the part of an enemy against him in requital of his trust? He, to whom it is betrayed, will be the first to detect and insult his perfidiousness, as the Wise man remarks; Prov. xxv. 9. One such light word is sure to draw after it much bitterness, fruitless anxiety, guilty fear, enmity, disgrace, and fruitless repentance.

Though holy conversation on heavenly things is to be sought on all proper occasions, yet it is not to be introduced at unseasonable times, or in company where it will appear tedious, or dull, or be not received with due attention; for this can only serve to make piety disagreeable, and to be burthensome to others. Nor are such subjects ever to be mentioned without that high respect, which is due to them. Hence St. Gregory Nazianzen, in his Precepts to Virgins says: "Women must not presume to speak much on the Trinity, or other divine mysteries, but hear more."

DISCOURSE XLIX.

ON DETRACTION.

1. DETRACTION is an unjust and secret taking away or diminution of the reputation of another. It is committed not only by taking away our neighbour's good name, as by laying some crime to his charge; but also by unjustly diminishing it, as by denying or depreciating his virtue or good qualities; by silence, which may be interpreted a denying or an extenuation of them; or by praising them coldly, by which others will conceive them not to be worthy of praise; for it is generally worse to commend another coldly than openly to condemn him, as Phavorinus the Grecian philosopher used to say. Whispering is a detraction, which tends to sow discord between persons, or to create hatred and ill-will. It is a mor grievous sin than simple detraction; as friendship is a good of a distinct order. "The whisperer and the double-tongued is accursed." Eccl. xxvii. "The Lord is said to hate him, who sows discord among brethren." Prov. vi. Slander or calumny is an imputation of a false charge or crime. Hence detraction or slander differ only by the circumstance, that in the former the charge or blemish is true, in the latter false. To detract or slander others by public libels, or news, or histories is a more grievous injustice. Even the dead live by their good name; and it is looked upon as more impious, and was called by the heathens sacrilegious, to injure the ashes of the dead. The truth of history allows only those crimes to be published to posterity, that are now public and certain, or which the public good requires to be be made known.

2. In the definition of detraction the word unjust is added; because this crime is not committed, where there is no injustice, as where our own or others necessary defence requires that we divulge the crime of another; or where the crime is already public. A person, who has been convicted and condemned in a public court of judicature, has lost his right to his reputation as to that fact. Also, if any disgrace or crime of a person be already known to so many, that morally speaking it will certainly be divulged over the whole community, and may be already esteemed public and notorious, so that it cannot by any excuse be concealed or wiped off; as if it be already known at many houses in a neighbourhood; in this case the person has lost reputation in that place; whence it is no injury to tell it to one, who had not yet heard of it. But he would sin against charity, who would be often repeating it, because no one would think such a treatment charitable in his own case. It would be a mortal sin even once to mention it out of hatred or revenge; and it would be an unjust detraction to mention it in a distant country, where it is not public.

It is also just to disclose another's crime, when this is necessary for our own or others justification, or to preserve ourselves or others from some considerable danger or prejudice, or to ask advice, or to correct a sinner. But for the purpose of fraternal correction it is never lawful to tell parents or superiors, if a private admonition will suffice. The order of charity is to be observed according to the law of nature, as delivered by our blessed Redeemer. "Go and reprove him between thee and him alone. If he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more; as a parent, a pastor, a

master, or a friend; if he will not hear them, tell the church." Mat. xviii. 15, 16. But it is not lawful to inform any one person more than necessity absolutely requires, even for advice or correction. So strict is this obligation, that St. Thomas says the patriarch Joseph would have sinned in accusing his brothers to his father, if he had not first privately admonished them, though it should be evidently seen by certain circumstances, that such an admonition would be in vain.

Charity may sometimes oblige us to disclose the faults of another, to secure an innocent neighbour from some grievous danger; as for example, to tell him that such a servant or friend is a thief; that he cannot safely trust his life or fortune in the hands of such a one; that a certain beggar is a cheat. Thus St. Paul admonished Timothy; "Alexander the copper-smith hath done me much evil; whom do thou also avoid." 2 Tim. iv. 14.

3. Detraction is a mortal sin, when committed in a matter of weight; as e. g. relative to any considerable blemish, whether natural or moral; in birth, fortune or manners; or by stating that a person is guilty of some grievous sin, unskilful in his business, or the like. An imputation of some mortal sin, as of swearing rashly, or of drunkenness, spoken of a man who, by frequently committing it publicly, shows that he boasts of it, or at least does not care who knows it, is not a grievous detraction in such circumstances; but on the other hand, in regard of a person of eminent sanctity, the charge of a wilful, though venial sin, may be a matter of weight.

4. To discover the nature of detraction, and to conceive some idea of its enormity, we must consider its malice, its baseness, and its most pernicious consequences. It directly attacks and destroys the two cardinal virtues, which are the bands and link of society, justice and charity. It violates justice, because it robs our neighbour of his good name, the most valuable of all external goods, which a man can possess. "A good name is better than much riches." Prov. xxii. "Have care of thy good name; for this will remain to thee more than many great and precious treasures." Eccles. xli. 15. Our civil life, and all the advantages of society, depend upon it. These are so important to man, who is formed to live in society, and is linked with, and depends upon, the commerce and services of others in all his affairs and duties, that sometimes it is more dear, more valuable, and precious to him than even his natural life, which it survives; for a man lives by it after his death. St. Thomas teaches (2ae. q. 73. a. 3,) that detraction is a sin less enormous in itself than murder; but more grievous than theft, because among external goods reputation excels riches, and comes nearer to spiritual goods. We read in the canon law: "He who bereaves his brother of his corporal life, and he who hates him, and he who detracts him, are all murderers." De pœnit. 1, cap. homicidiorum. Can we make it our diversion to rob our neighbour of the most precious of all temporal goods, which he can possess, and murder his reputation for our amusement?

5. Charity, the queen of all virtues, is no less injured by this vice than justice. The love of our neighbour is grounded on our love of God himself. It is for his sake that we are bound to love one another. We are to contemplate his image in every brother, and the motives of his divine charity. All these we injure by detraction. He is a member of Christ,

against whom we throw our dart; and a member of whom he has said; "Whatever you shall do to one of these little ones, you shall do to me."

No wonder that detractors are declared hateful to God. Prov. vi. 19. We are bound by the law of charity to follow the same rule towards our neighbour, which we desire that he should follow towards us. But how opposite here is our conduct? We are most tender in every thing, in which our honour is interested, and find the least wound in this part extremely sensible; yet we make it a diversion to murder him in his reputation. The prophet Jeremiah complained, that his enemies, in their implacable rage, armed themselves against him, saying: "Let us kill him with our tongues;" (Jer. xviii.) let us cast ourselves upon him as a prey prepared for us; let us tear him to pieces with the general instrument of our malice, our tongues; by invectives and calumnies. The Apostle speaking of this vice says: "If you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed by one another." Gal. v. 15. We devour our neighbour, when we tear his good name with our tongues.

Moreover, "in other sins, as in impurity, a man only kills himself; but he, who detracts, murders also his hearers, as St. Jerom says in (Ps. 100, p. 387, t. 2.) St. Chrysostom observes, that the detractor wounds many at one stroke by one word; he gives a mortal stab to his own soul by his sin; likewise to the souls of as many as listen to him, or propagate it again; or among whom quarrels or suspicions will be raised by it, or scandals given; he likewise wounds the common state of the church by these evils, besides the bitterness, uneasiness, and loss of reputation, which he causes in all its members. Hom. 3, ad. Pop. Antioch. n. 5, t. 2, p. 42.

6. Also the manner, in which he inflicts these wounds, carries along with it a particular baseness and treachery. Even abstracting from motives of grace and christianity, if we have any principle of honour, we avoid whatever has a character of baseness, and can draw on us hatred and contempt. For even natural pride make us sensible of honour. Now detraction is a vice so base, that nothing can efface its meanness. For, to begin with the person, he, whom we detract, is either an enemy, or a friend, or a person indifferent to us. If he be an enemy, every one will justly think that we speak out of passion; and that, if this man were in our interest, we should not condemn him. Thus, whether they believe us or not, they will at least conceive a contempt of us, and pity our weakness. If he be a friend, what a baseness is it to betray the laws of friendship, to set upon him whose protector we ought to be; to expose him to contempt, from whom we have received favours and kindnesses, who perhaps, this moment is serving and defending us; to outrage him on one side, whom we flatter and entertain with fine speeches to his face? Is it possible, that men should suffer themselves to be carried to such a pitch of insincerity? But perhaps the person is one indifferent to us. Is it not then a baseness to spit your venom upon him? to injure him, from whom you never received any harm? Nor does detraction attack others by means, which become persons of honour, but by the tongue. "Whose teeth are weapons and arrows; and their tongue a sharp sword." Ps. lvi. 5. The devil in the disguise of a serpent attacked our first parents in paradise with this instrument; by which "he was a murderer from the beginning." John viii. This is the weapon of the detractor. And what is the time, which he chooses to give the stroke? When the person is most out of a condition to defend himself. For the calumniator attacks him not to his face; he is

very circumspect in his iniquity; he uses great precaution. As long as the person is present, or any friend that will defend him, not a word is spoken against him. But when no one is by to undertake his cause, then we detract boldly. Is not this the most base and dastardly impudence? Men of false worldly honour, who trample upon all laws divine and human to revenge an affront received, rather than bear it with christian meekness and patience, still scorn basely to assault their enemy behind his back, or in any base ungenerous way; they have a horror at treachery or cowardice in their crime; an assassination is a baseness of soul, a stain which nothing could ever wipe off; yet this is the conduct of the detracter. On this account the Holy Ghost compares detracters to serpents biting without making a noise. "If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better that backbiteth secretly." Eccles. x. 11. Men in detracting often demand secrecy of those, to whom they speak. Is not this to condemn, and to render themselves contemptible? Is not this to confess their own injustice, and to say: Be you more charitable and more prudent than I am. Do not imitate my example.

7. This is not all. Men study by various arts to instil the poison of their detraction, by which they render it the more fatal. The studied equivocations, in which they wrap it up, the artifices and wiles, which they employ, make it more insinuating and more agreeable. "His words are smoother than oil, and the same are darts." Ps. liv. 22. "You will see them," says St. Bernard, (Serm. 24, in Cant.) "fetch deep sighs before they speak, assume an air of charity, express by their accent and by their words a tenderness and compassion, only for fear they should seem to detract out of malice. I am exceeding sorry for him, they will say, because I love the man; but I never could correct him of this or that fault. Or, he has many good qualities; but we are obliged to speak the truth; in this he is not to be excused. Or, this should never have been published by me; but as it is already known, I may tell it to you." Thus does iniquity lie to itself, says that saint. But what is the effect of these restrictions and excuses, of these reflections full of cruel compassion, of the casts of the eyes or tone of the voice, which speak, without saying any thing, and which say more than words can? Instead of palliating the malice of the heart, they make it more dangerous; because they make it appear more sincere, and more agreeable. If it were too impudent, no one would listen to it; if it showed itself in its naked colours, others would have an horror at its sight; but under these borrowed disguises even lies pass for truth, and the most unjust detractions are listened to and greedily swallowed down. Many allege pretexts of zeal and of the glory of God, and thus find a means of consecrating detractions under the name of virtue. It is for the good of the church, for the sake of true piety, say they, that we are obliged to discover what sort of a man such a one is. Thus by a pretended direction of their intention they sanctify every rash judgment, every suspicion, every calumny. But God, who sees their hearts, discerns all the malice, which is there harboured. Nothing less than his service, than his glory is their motive. If it were, their conduct would be very opposite. They would mention these faults only to those, who might remedy them; not publish them before persons, who are scandalized at them. "Thy mouth hath abounded with evil; and thy tongue hath artfully framed deceits." Ps. xlix. 19. Some are so wilfully blind as to call it an excuse of their malice, because they tell their detraction only to one person, or

because what they say is true. To blacken the reputation of another before one person is a grievous detraction. Moreover, will not this person have also his confidant to whom, notwithstanding his promise, he will tell it again; and in this he will only do as we have done, and imitate our example. Experience shows, that, under the whisper of a secret, a detraction is soon carried over a whole neighbourhood, and made public.

As to the second pretext, that it is only the truth; this constitutes detraction. If it were false, it would be also slander. Moreover, how do we know it to be truth? We shall find ourselves often mistaken, even when we pretend to be the best informed. The greater part of detractions, even in their rise, are founded on rash judgments, suspicions, and falsehoods, at least in part. And what has passed through the mouths of others, is never heard again without some alterations and additions. Fame is continually adding something to reports; and in detraction slanders are much more frequent than is commonly imagined.

8. The dreadful consequences of this vice make it still more odious and detestable; as first, a coldness between friends, open enemies, dissensions, and the disturbance of the peace sometimes of a whole neighbourhood. Perhaps, whole ages will not be sufficient to close the wounds, which one word has made. After a thousand reconciliations the sore may still remain open. These are the daily known dire effects of detraction. Moreover, what frettings, what pains, what anxieties do individuals hence suffer? "A man full of tongue is terrible in his city, and he, that is rash in his word, is hateful." Eccles. ix. 25. The detracter is terrible in his family, in his city, in his whole country. He carries desolation wherever he goes; he wounds the souls of all, with whom he converses; he destroys the peace of families, and disturbs the tranquillity of the commonwealth. If he backbite a magistrate, a pastor, or superior, he ruins his authority, destroys the public order, and fills the state with confusion. Let those remember this, who continually censure parents, magistrates, or superiors. "The prince of thy people do not curse." Exod. xxii. 28. Mary was struck with a leprosy for having spoken against her brother Moses. Num. xxii. 10.

9. The difficulty of doing sincere penance for this sin is another circumstance, which ought to make every one tremble at its very name. The reason is, because all injustice obliges to restitution; but, above all other kinds of injustice, detraction brings the most terrible obligations of this nature. First, because the reparation of honour and reputation is of all others the most tender and most important. Secondly, because this admits the least excuses of all others. Thirdly, because it extends itself to consequences, which are endless. To restore the good name of your neighbour is a point of the greatest difficulty, yet indispensable in this case. Whence that great director of souls, Lewis of Granada, said, that he trembled when he heard a penitent name detraction, above all sins. If a man has taken away the goods of another, he would condemn himself to restitution; yet his goods are far less than his honour. And if we have injured another in his fortune, we can compute, and make an estimate of his loss; but not in the ruin of his reputation; we know not where or when his losses here will end. We indeed have gained nothing by it ourselves; which is the extravagance of this sin. A thief, who takes our purse, enriches himself by it; not he who robs another of his reputation; yet he makes him poor indeed.

"Who steals my purse steals trash;
'Twas mine; 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands:
But he, who filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that, which not enriches him,
Yet makes me poor indeed." SHAKESPEARE.

And nothing can excuse the obligation of repairing the unjust prejudices excited against him. No authority on earth can dispense from it. All the jurisdiction, which Christ has left in his church, cannot exempt you. Though it cost you your honour, it must be done. Restitution of goods unjustly taken must be made to the prejudice of your own fortune; so in this case, though it cost you your own honour. This is mortifying and difficult; yet it must be. It is a debt you have contracted; you owe your honour to those, whom you have injured; and the order of God requires this sacrifice. In case of calumny you are obliged to confess publicly, that you slandered your innocent neighbour; but in detraction what will you do? The crime divulged by you is true; this you cannot deny. Restitution here will generally be impossible, yet must be attempted as much as possible by all the means in your power. You are a debtor as long as you live. You will say, that you spoke only one word, innocently and without malice; that you told it as a secret; that you spoke what you had heard from another. But nothing of these excuses can exempt you from the guilt of your crime, or from the obligation of restitution. Add, that the consequences of your detraction are almost endless. A word often ruins another's fortune, protection, friend, marriage, business, and success in the world; creates discords, enmities, troubles, and intestine wars. A person, who was asked about the credit of a certain merchant, answered only by shrugging up his shoulders, and this dumb sign ruined a man worth ten thousand pounds. All these evils are to be repaired. The hearers and all others, who have been drawn into sin by your scandal, are to be converted to God, by your admonitions to repentance, if possible, or the loss of their souls will be laid to your charge. Oh! how difficult a task is this restitution? But, O still more dreadful truth! How little is it practised, how little is it heard or thought of among christians? It is then true, that few do sincere penance for this sin. It is then true, that innumerable christian souls, it is to be feared much the greater part, are damned in part for this crime. For it is more certain, that detraction is the most common of all crimes. Ambition, avarice, impurity, and other sins attack only certain persons; but who is he, that will be found to have lived totally free from detraction? Even those, who have embraced a more severe practice of virtue, often fall a prey to it. Yet this sin excludes from the kingdom of heaven, as the Apostle assures us. Nay detraction is named in every black list of sins mentioned by him. Rom. i. 30. 2 Cor. xii. 20. Whence St. Bernard cried out to his religious: "Unless we refrain from this sin, it is in vain that we mortify our bodies the whole day. All our painful exercises of penance will not avail us. Could we not have found a more easy and a more supportable way to hell?" As St. Chrysostom said to his people: "We know that, though we fast on bread and ashes, we shall reap no profit from our austerities, unless we shun detraction." Hom. 9, ad Pop. Antioch n. 6, t. 2, p. 44. Satisfaction is also to be made for contumely, which is an opprobrious word spoken to a man's face. This dishonours him, and obliges him by a reparation by asking his pardon publicly, or by some like means.

10. We must examine and shun the sources of this vice. The first is idleness, as St. Paul mentions, (1 Tim. v. 11, 12, 13; 2 Thess. iii. 11.) "Sitting thou spokedst against thy neighbour." Ps. xlix. 11. A second cause is vanity and a desire to please others. Men detract to divert others and keep up conversation. How shall a man succeed in this? Shall he talk of indifferent things? these will interest no one. Shall he praise the virtues of his neighbours? this would be to become dull and tedious. Shall he speak of devotions? no man will hear him. Detraction is the amusement of idle minds, the topic which makes conversation agreeable, and raises the attention of every one. Passions make all men both speak it and hear it with pleasure. For thirdly, the great sources of this sin are pride and envy. Saul spoke against David, because he had more friends than himself; Core against Aaron, because he was vested with the priesthood. By pride we conceive an inordinate esteem of ourselves: hence we despise others. Without this perverse disposition we should find no pleasure in ripping up the faults of others. But we think their praises detract from our merit, and that what is taken from others is given to us. Lastly, antipathies and hatred produce detractions. Through their false glasses we can discern nothing but faults in those, against whom we entertain these prejudices.

To avoid detraction, we must ground our souls in sincere charity and humility. If we love our neighbours, we shall palliate and excuse their faults; and hear them mentioned with pain, not with pleasure. Their merit and praises will be our joy. If by humility we have our own faults always before our eyes, we shall never speak or willingly hear those of others. St. Basil, (regul. brevior. regula 289,) orders one, who has been guilty of detraction, to be cured by exercises of humility in the meanest employments; and (reg. 26,) that the detracter and he, who listened to him, be both banished from the company of the brethren for some time. Against this vice every one must learn to govern and refrain his tongue. A word once let slip is not to be recalled. And we must always observe this rule, when we speak of our neighbours, to say nothing but what we would say if they themselves were present, unless charity requires it; and in this case sincerely to ask our own hearts, before we speak, whether in the same circumstances we should be willing, that others should speak of us in the same manner. Gerson, resp. ad 4 quæstiones, t. 2, p. 465.

If others have spoken ill of us, we must overcome it by patience and meekness, remembering that Christ was calumniated for our sakes, and has pronounced us happy if we share in this cross. Secondly, That this humiliation is the cure of our pride, our satisfaction for sin, part of our penance, and the great means of our perfection.

11. In detraction the hearer often sins as grievously as he who detracts, and is no less bound to restitution, nay more, if, by encouraging, assisting, or flattering the detracter, he is the chief cause of the evil discourse. Whence St. Thomas says: 2, 2æ. q. 73, a. 4. "He sins no less than the detracter; sometimes more." And St. Bernard, "Whether of the two be more damnable, to detract, or to hear the detracter, I cannot easily say."

He who hears a detraction with pleasure, though he no ways encourage it by his looks or otherwise; and he who did not hinder the detraction, when it was in his power to do so? is guilty of a mortal sin against charity. Not only they, who do evil, but they, who consent to it, are worthy of death. Rom. i. A superior is always bound to correct an inferior, who

detracts in his presence; so is every one with regard to his neighbour, unless so much his superior that it could not be attempted, or unless he justly fears that it will only exasperate, or that it will draw some considerable prejudice upon himself; or if he be scrupulous, and only doubts whether what is said be detraction. In these cases he is obliged no ways to concur in the sin by listening, smiling, answering, or the like. If it can be done, he ought to rise and leave the company; if this would be an affront, and he cannot turn the discourse to some other subject, or defend the absent person, he must at least, by the gravity and sadness of his looks, testify his displeasure. "The north wind driveth away rain; so doth a sad countenance a backbiting tongue." Prov. xxv. 23.

12. St. Paulinus, in his epistle to Calentia, (inter ep. St. Hieron. ultima, t. 4, p. 816,) after complaining how universally this vice reigns, says very justly: "Happy is he, who hath so armed himself against this vice, that no one dares to detract another before him." If we were so diligent, as never to believe or listen to detracters, all men would be afraid to backbite, lest they should render themselves contemptible, not others. But this evil is general, and many are addicted to it, because almost all men hear it with pleasure. St. Chrysostom writes: "When you hear any one backbite, say; If you have any one to praise, I will willingly hear you; this will give me pleasure and edification. But what shall I gain by learning, that a person is wicked? This will be a grief and a loss. Speak to him, intreat him, show your charity to him; thus endeavour to gain him to God. This is the part of one, who desires to heal his wounds. Let us consider our own sins, and the account we must give to God for ourselves, and drop this perverse curiosity in others' affairs. What insolence would it be to search every corner of your neighbour's house? If whisperers once learn by experience, that by detracting they make us detest them, not those whom they speak against, they will correct their criminal custom, and will afterwards thank us as the authors of their salvation."

13. One would think, that a vice so heinous in itself, so terrible in its consequences both spiritual and temporal, so dangerous to our salvation, and so hateful both to God and man, should scarcely be found among men. One would think, that all men would conspire together to declare war against this pest of society; for every one is personally interested in it. He, who detracts one, threatens every body. When you hear one detract an absent person, think it will be your turn to be absent to-morrow, and that then he will perhaps make you the subject of his raillery and of the diversion of the company. Undertake now the defence of an injured brother, who is not present to justify himself, as you would wish to find a zealous advocate in the same circumstances. "God hath given a charge to every one of his neighbour." Eccl. xvii. "Let the detracter bear the mark of his own confusion, and be the mark of his own confusion, and be the abhorrence of all mankind." "The detracter is the abomination of all mankind. Prov. xxiv. Imitate the zeal of holy David, who attests that he found himself filled with indignation, if he happened to hear any one secretly backbiting his neighbour, and that he thought it his duty to persecute and confound him. Ps. c.[a] If we make charity the rule of our lives, we shall shun the snares of the devil, and shall obtain much grace and eternal glory. "Many have fallen by the edge of the sword; but not so many as have perished by their own tongue." Eccl. xxviii. 22.

[a] Detrahentem secreto proximo suo hunc persequebar.

DISCOURSE L.

ON ANGER.

1. ANGER is a desire of revenge. Four violent appetites in the soul of man form as many violent passions; the desire of honour and greatness, the desire of riches, the desire of sensual pleasure, and the desire of revenge. Some have thought the kind, which comprehends lust and gluttony, the most vehement, on account of the great difficulty in overcoming it when once grown to a habit; but it is generally agreed, that anger is the most impetuous, and it sometimes degenerates into fury and even frenzy; whence it is absolutely called passion, because the most violent among all the distempers of the mind. The irascible faculty is engrafted by God in man, to give him an ardour to destroy vice, and to defend him against evil. And not to resist and chastise vice with a suitable zeal and vigour is a criminal remissness and indolence of soul. Hence there is a certain holy zeal, which may be called a just and virtuous anger. Such was that of Phineas. And Heli was condemned, because he had not this holy anger against his wicked children. Of this anger many understand that verse, (Ps. iv.) "Be angry and do not sin:" though it be explained by several commentators of the indignation, with which a penitent arms himself against his own sins. But it is much more easy not to be angry at all, than to be angry without sinning in it, as St. Francis of Sales takes notice; for something inordinate, and exciting disturbance, will almost necessarily creep into the desire of revenge, at least as to the manner.

2. Anger may be inordinate in the excess of the revenge, which is desired, or in the manner, in which it is desired, as if with immoderate vehemence, or with violent agitation of mind or body. It is against the law of nature; because it neither observes the bounds of justice, nor of charity, nor of reason. If the revenge itself be unjust or excessive, the sin is usually mortal; if the manner only be inordinate, it is most frequently only venial, unless the fury and rage of the mind were extreme, or the exterior contortions very extravagant and indecent. Though the revenge were just in itself, it would still be a grievous sin, if the motive of this desire were not the love of justice; but hatred or the passion of revenge. The law of nature forbids any man to be angry in his own cause; for it forbids him to be a judge in it, on account of the bias, under which he lies in his own favour. Holy Scripture reckons anger among the deadly sins. St. Paul names it among the works of the flesh, which exclude us from the kingdom of heaven. Gal. v. 20. "He, who is angry with his brother, is liable to judgment; and he who says to him Raca," a word of contempt, "is guilty before the council, and he who shall call him Fool, is guilty of hell fire." Mat. v. 22. "Anger kills the fool." Job v. 2. God says: "Revenge belongs to me, and I will render in the season." Deut. xxxii. "Rendering to no man evil for evil." Rom. xii.

3. It is a capital sin, because the source and mother of many other grievous sins. St. Gregory in his Morals, and St. Thomas mention these principal ones. First, Indignation, by which a person in his heat despises another, and judges him beneath himself. This is a mortal sin when

perfect; for such a contempt of a brother is a mortal sin, and a grievous pride.

Second, Swelling of the mind, which is an interior tumor of the mind, big with the desire of revenge.

Third, Brawling, or confused clamorous words of passion.

Fourth, Quarrelling, or a disagreement proceeding to blows or other actions.

We add; malice and hatred.

Sullenness, or a silence of malice, or contempt, to provoke the adversary.

We must add oaths, curses, detractions, rancour, rash judgments, slanders &c., which frequently are produced by anger; and, with the great men of the earth, wars, oppressions, and all manner of evils and injustices.

4. Anger hurts ourselves and our neighbour, and highly displeases God; for it destroys both justice and charity in our souls; it disturbs his Holy Spirit abiding in us, and fills our breast, which he makes his dwelling, with disorder and horror, nay banishes him thence. For his place or abode is in peace; and his spirit rests in the humble and peaceable. This vice effaces the image in the soul, which consists in meekness. What should we say of one, who should break down the crucifix in a church, and set up an idol of the devil in its place? Anger raises itself up against the Almighty, and usurps his right and authority, who cries out: "Revenge belongs to me, and I will render what is due." Rom. xii. The angry man will not wait for the justice of God, and leave his cause to him, but will be himself judge in his own cause, and pretends to do justice to himself, without authority, and against the order established by the sovereign Lord. We read in the lives of the fathers, that the abbot Philosius, seeing one angry, began to pray thus: "O God, it is no longer necessary that you should be solicitous for us, since one here thinks we can and may revenge ourselves." At which reflection the other entered into himself, and repented with bitter contrition.

5. Anger particularly pleases the devil, whose character is malice, and who is especially delighted with malice and hurting others; anger is an imitation of him in this his infernal temper. Charity seeks the good of all; this vice is the reverse, and studies the prejudice of others. Hence the name of malice is given to it, because evil is its delight and wish. Moreover, this passion blinds the man, and plunges him headlong into extravagancies and crimes. Nothing can be more pleasing to the devil than this miserable state of blindness, which destroys all seeds of good, and hurries into evil without consideration or fear. Nay, by anger the devil gains an entire command in a soul, and by it drags her where he pleases. A horse, that has lost his eyes, can be led every where; and a beast follows the direction of its rider. The soul, which is carried away with anger, is both blind, and has the devil for its ruler, and as it were rider.

6. Anger hurts our neighbour, often destroying the souls of many others, by provoking them to quarrels, passion, and all the pernicious effects of this fury both in mind and body. Like a furious dog it bites others, and so provokes them to bite in their turn. It spreads its scandal and mortal influence over whole families, or even cities; spares not wife, children or others. The nearest and dearest friends generally suffer first and most from it. The angry man also destroys their temporal happiness, disturbing the whole house, banishing from all his friends peace of mind, the greatest of temporal blessings, and filling them with uneasiness and frights, and making himself terrible to them. "It is better to meet a she-

bear, that has lost her whelps, than a fool confident in his folly." Prov. xviii. "A passionate man raises quarrels; but he who is patient appeases those, that are raised." Prov. xv. His very wife and children dread his presence. "He is a lion in his house. Who can bear the violence of a provoked mind?" Eccl. xxii. Whence the wise man advises: "Be not linked in friendship with the passionate man." Prov. xxii. He is like a serpent breathing fire, devouring those, who approach him. Every one is afraid to speak or to move a hand before him.

7. Anger above all hurts the person, whose breast harbours it. It wounds his soul, and expels thence the Holy Ghost, the God of peace and love. It confounds reason, darkens and disturbs the mind, and makes him incapable of business as a rational creature. He, who is patient, is master of his own soul, of his words, and of his actions. But the impatient man says and does many things, of which he soon repents, and which he would wish to recal. "He, who is impatient, will suffer loss;" Prov. xix. the loss of his soul, the loss of the graces and spiritual advantages, which he would have gained by patience, the loss of friends, whom he has provoked, the loss of his own happiness, and of his peace and tranquillity of mind, the loss of his reputation; for all the world hates and condemns his anger, how just soever his cause may be; a loss generally in his temporal concerns, which are usually injured, and never promoted by anger. What advantage does an angry man give his adversary over him by his words, or extravagant actions? Politicians know that, if they can provoke an antagonist, they will easily defeat him; for he will dig a pit for himself. The exterior behaviour of men in passion is so brutish and unbecoming, that this alone ought to make us abhor this vice. It is still more frightful in persons placed in a conspicuous rank.

8. Nor can anger produce any good. It is not a means to correct sinners. If it restrain their hand, it will never amend, but exasperate their heart. "The anger of man works not the righteousness of God." James i. 20. One sin is never a means to amend or correct another. It can never deserve the benediction of God, whom it offends; nor will it convert the neighbour, whom it scandalizes. A child, on seeing his parent correct him in anger, attributes the correction itself to anger, not to justice, and so receives no benefit from it; on the contrary he learns by this sin of his parent to despise sin, and more easily to offend God.

9. Anger implies an excess of folly; for the angry man seeks to heal his own wound by wounding another. "He seeks revenge," says St. Austin, "as if the punishment of another could avail him. He seeks a remedy from the suffering of another, and torments himself." Nay, what is much more extravagant, he murders his own spiritual soul to revenge himself on another, because he thinks himself injured by him. Again, what a madness would it be, if a man destroyed his only resource out o revenge against another? Yet he, who is angry, shuts the mercy of God against himself, by which alone he can be saved. Boetius shows, (l, de cons. philos.) that no wise man can ever be angry at another; for, if the other be just and innocent, this would be most impious; if the other be wicked, he deserves our compassion, not our rage, in the same manner as the corporal distempers of others move us to pity. At least, as Seneca says: "It is ridiculous to lose your own innocence for the sake of one, who is guilty." If another be blind, ought we not to pity his state? Cures are to be the contraries to the distemper. We must cure another's hatred by love, not by returning hatred; by patience, not by revenge. He, who

offered the injury, has set a precious stone in our heavenly crown, if we bear it patiently. True greatness of soul, courage, and virtue consist in commanding ourselves. Anger is a baseness of soul. "Anger rests in the breast of the fool." Eccles. vii. "Let not anger conquer you." Job xvi.

10. The remedies against the anger of others are, first, mild words. "A soft answer extinguishes anger." Prov. xv. In the lives of the fathers of the desart we read, that a young monk meeting a priest of the idols approached him, and the priest in fury beat him. St Macarius soon after met the same priest, and saluted him with sweetness and respect; which gained at once the idolater, who cried out: "This is a true servant of God." He was immediately converted to the faith, and became a hermit. See the effects of harsh words on one side, and of mild on the other. When the insolence of Nabal to David had provoked him to vow his destruction, the meekness and courtesy of Abigail appeased his choler. A certain young nobleman came, with his dogs and a troop of insolent servants, under the windows of the chamber of St. Francis of Sales, and vented his rage against that holy prelate by the most outrageous noise and language, which he repeated with the greatest insolence to his face several times. The saint heard all his most impudent and unjust contumelies with an invincible sweetness and patience. One afterwards asked him, how he could have kept his peace. He answered: "My heart and tongue have long made an inviolable bargain together, that, if my heart felt any emotion or inclination to anger, my tongue should keep the strictest silence. And what could I have said or done to appease his choler better than by silence?" This saint, by his astonishing meekness, won the hearts of all men, and overcame the most obstinate. This must be a silence of charity and mildness, not of contempt or sullenness, which would exasperate the more.

Meek silence, such as now mentioned, is the second remedy against the anger of others. "When wood fails, the fire will go out." Prov. xxvi. "Do not dispute with the contentious man, and do not build wood upon his fire." Prov. viii. During his passion a man is incapable of reason; when he is calm, we may prevail with him. "Not defending yourselves, but give way to anger." Rom. xii.

A third remedy is, to confer benefits and favours in return for hatred. "If thy enemy shall be hungry, give him to eat; if he be thirsty, give him to drink. This is to heap burning coals on his head." Prov. xxv. 21. As water extinguishes fire, so do benefits anger. But in this prudence is to be observed.

11. The general remedies against anger are patience, mortification of our own will, humility, and charity. The serious meditation and remembrance of the passion and meekness of our blessed Redeemer will inspire us with a holy confusion for our want of patience, and will make us think nothing hard to suffer. The remembrance of our sins, and what we deserve for them, will give us true patience under all trials.

Any excessive attachment to riches or any other object is a source of anger; for any thing, which threatens it, disturbs the mind, and excites anger, All such attachments therefore must be retrenched; and he, who finds any such growing in his heart, must arm himself against its occasions; e. g. against any disturbance of mind, if his desire of gain or of riches be thwarted. He, who is subject to whims and peevishness, must overcome them by mortification. It is in vain that he takes precautions

against exterior assaults, as long as he neglects the root of his distemper within his own breast. Jealousy, inquisitiveness, and credulity in hearing tale-bearers, a captious cavilling humour, or a suspicious temper easily fancying that others mean to insult us, are sources of passion, and must be corrected: fondness and attachments to foolish trifles must also be overcome. The mind must be made indifferent to them, and satisfied with whatever is first at hand.

Humility is the most necessary virtue to extirpate anger. A proud man thinks every thing due to him, and that others never pay him sufficient respect, deference, or regard. All inordinate anger is founded in pride. For he, who is angry, desires to be revenged on those, who contemn him; it is only the contempt of us, either real or imaginary, that moves us to passion; and could we separate contempt from the object, which provokes, we should feel it no longer an incentive to anger. If a stone hurt us by chance, we are not angry at it, like a dog which bites the stick, that hits him; but only when it is thrown at us with an evil intention to hurt. It is then chiefly the scorn, that excites anger. Our pride is apt easily to conceive itself slighted. Had we the art of bearing contempt, contumelies, and injuries, we should have little experience of anger. "You know not how to suffer wrong, but I do," said a philosopher in Plutarch to one who was angry. An humble man is always meek and good in temper. As he thinks nothing due to him, he imagines the least things too much; full of contempt of himself he is persuaded, that men do him justice, when they despise him. Thus he never thinks himself ill treated; and, as he always loves the last place, he finds no one to dispute it with him.

Charity is also a sovereign preservative against anger. "Charity is patient and kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things." 1 Cor. xiii. What was the pattern of charity, which Christ has set us? "Who when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered, threatened not; but delivered himself to him, that judged him unjustly." 1 Peter ii. 23. If a man feels any secret antipathy against some particular person on account of any disagreeableness in his manner, &c., he must watch over himself, never to be provoked at him, because of the danger, to which such a disposition exposes him.

12. The particular means to overcome this passion are, first, never to speak or do any thing, when we find our heart moved to anger, especially if this be any way violent. It is much easier to be silent, than to speak on such occasion without heat or passion. Even when it is necessary to correct another without delay, and the correction cannot be suspended till the danger of anger be over, it ought not to take place till the mind be carefully calmed by some pause and short reflection; and the words and corrections must be moderated by the rule of discretion, for fear passion be kindled. But, if possible, let it be deferred. The least vent, given to the soul under the emotion of the heart, inflames the passion. Seneca tells us, (l. 1, de ira, c. 15.) that Socrates said once to his slave: "I would beat thee, if I were not angry." "Who can hope to govern his passion in anger, seeing that Socrates durst not expose himself to it?" says the same philosopher. He adds, (l. 3, de ira. c. 12,) "The greatest remedy of anger is a delay, that its heat may be cooled. Plato being about to beat

a slave, perceiving himself angry, held his hands lifted up a long time, but would not strike. A friend asked him the reason? "I punish myself for my anger, said he. Do you, Speusippus, chastise him, for I am angry." In like manner Archytas said to the slave, who had care of his vineyard, and who had totally neglected it: "How would I have chastized thee, if I had not been angry," as Tully mentions, (Tuscul. l. 4, m. 437.) Athenodorus, a philosopher of Greece, advised Augustus, when he should be angry, to recite the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet before he spoke, as Aurelius Victor tells us in the life of Theodosius. After the massacre of Thessalonica, St. Ambrose prescribed to the emperor Theodosius the law, which he made, that no one should be executed till thirty days after the sentence.

Another remedy against anger is, that a person do never pardon himself the least emotion of passion, but enjoin himself some chastisement for it, either asking pardon of the person, against whom he was angry, if they are his superiors or equals; if they are inferiors, making them amends some other way, as by obliging words, condemning himself to some alms, prayer for the person, &c.

13. It is another necessary means, that a person subject to this vice should foresee, in his morning or evening prayer, the occasions of it, which he cannot shun, and that he meet them already prepared and armed against them. I knew a person, who, when one called for him, said to himself: perhaps it is one that will call me rogue and thief, and treat me as the basest of wretches. If so, I shall be prepared to receive all, and shall meet only what I expect; I resolve not to suffer any emotion to arise in my heart, or to speak any thing harsh. By this means no provocation surprized him, or ever moved him to anger. A man should thus arm himself before any probable occasion. Epictetus, the heathen moral philosopher, lays down this rule against anger: "Is your oil spilt? Is your estate unjustly taken from you? say to yourself; meekness and peace of mind is to be purchased by me at this price. Nothing is acquired without cost. When you call your servant, think that perhaps he is not at hand, and, if he is, that he will not do according to your mind." Enchir. c. 17. If a heathen could reason thus, how much more ought a Christian to bear all things, and to curb his passion for the preservation of this great virtue, the excellence of which, not only reason but faith discovers to him, by the most noble supernatural motives, and by the high rewards, which are promised to it? St. Stephen and the other saints could not be angry at their persecutors and murderers, knowing them to be the instruments, by which they merited heaven, and for the present the greatest graces, especially the pardon of their sins. The holy doctor Avila tells us, (ep. 5,) that St. Elizabeth, daughter to the king of Hungary, most affectionately prayed, that God would confer some singular mercy on every one, that had injured her; and that God revealed to her this had pleased him above all other prayers, and that he granted for it more abundant graces, and the remission of all her sins. The holy reformer of La Trappe, abbot Rancè, used to say, when he met with persecution; "As long as the devil does not become a christian, the world and the devil will always make war against those, who serve God, but can never hurt them, unless they wound themselves by impatience. I often say: we ought to buy enemies for their weight in gold. This is my disposition this long time. Therefore do not pity me in my sufferings. My condition rather deserves envy than compassion." Le Nain in his life, b. 5, c. 2.

14. Had we true charity, we should be moved to compassion and zeal for our neighbour's sin, not to anger against him. "Has another done you an injury?" says St. Chrysostom, (Serm. de laude Dei,) "grieve for his misfortune; weep for the wound of his soul, as our Lord deplored Judas. For he did not lament his own crucifixion, but that he was going to destroy himself. Has another injured you? pray God that he may be reconciled to you and heal his own sore. He is your brother, your member, of the same sacred regeneration or spiritual birth, and called to the same divine table and crown. Some one may say: If I do so, he will insult me the more. Then your recompense will be the greater. The devil has wounded him. He is not to be made worse; but you are to raise him up. If you by anger also fall, who will be able to help you both out of the precipice?" The same father in another place says: "You, who are sound and whole, ought in pity to sooth him, who has hurt himself by anger against you, and to apply a remedy." Hom. 61, ol. 62, in Mat. t. 7, p. 616, 617. He beautifully amplifies, that we reap great advantages and benefits from injuries, by bearing them with patience. "We obtain ourselves the remission of our sins. Moreover, you will be venerable to your enemies, though they were devils; or rather no one will be your enemy. The more he has injured you, the more ought you to pity and weep for him. If this does not suffice, remember thy Lord was called Beelzebub; how much more ought you to bear such affronts? If you would have the examples of fellow-servants, remember Joseph's towards his brothers; remember Moses praying for the Hebrews after all their injuries and snares; remember Paul wishing himself an anathema for the Jews after all that he had suffered from them; and Stephen praying for his calumniators and murderers, that their sins might be forgiven them." Even the heathens have set us examples of patience. St. Basil mentions Pericles conferring benefits on his enemies, and Socrates bearing patiently buffets on his face. Hom. 24, de legendis libris Græcis. St. Gregory observes, that we must all suffer injuries; no man is just or perfect, who does not bear them with patience. "There is no Abel, whom the malice of a Cain does not try." Moral. l. 20, c. 21.

15. Nothing recommends us more to God, nothing is more venerable or more amiable before men than meekness. Nothing is more glorious or greater. Constantine the great, when told, that some persons had cast stones at his statues, putting his hand to his forehead, said calmly: "I did not feel them." This action is justly represented as more glorious than all his victories and triumphs. For he is greater, who governs himself, than he who conquers the strongest cities, as the poet says.

It will appear more reasonable and necessary to practise meekness and forgiveness to others, if we remember that we often give others much to bear by our imperfections Nothing therefore is more just than that we should show that indulgence, which we desire to receive.

> "There's none but has some fault, and he is best,
> Most virtuous he, that's spotted with the least.
> HOR. l. 1, Sat. 3, v. 68.
>
> "And 'tis but just that he that hopes to find
> A pardon for his faults, should be as kind."
> Ib. v. 75.
>
> He, who would not have his sores to offend,
> Must pardon the pimples of his friend.

Another motive, which reason suggests, is, that without this mutual forgiveness peace amongst men is impossible, and dissensions are eternal. For hatred has this aggravating circumstance, that it is a vice which knows no end. "Other evils have their bounds, and every sin is finished with the fact; but anger has no end; it is a permanent evil, a sin which is never over." St. Cyprian, l. de zelo & livore.

DISCOURSE LI.

ON TEMPERANCE AS A CARDINAL VIRTUE.

1. TEMPERANCE in its largest acceptation is defined by St. Thomas, (2, 2æ, q. 141.) "The moderation of every affection according to the prescript of reason." Tully had defined it, "The dominion of reason over lust and all other importunate passions."[a] In this extended sense it is an universal virtue, or a part in the composition of every virtue; as all virtues consist in the just medium, which reason prescribes, and may be offended against either by excess or by defect. Thus pride is an excess; abjectness a defect; both contrary to the moderation, which humility prescribes in the true knowledge and rating of ourselves. See thy danger, my soul; every virtue is seated between contrary extremes, into either of which different passions labour to hurry thee. It is a mark, which thou art sure to miss, if thou aimest either too high or too low. It is a goal encompassed with precipices on both sides, into one of which thou wilt fall, if thou sufferest thyself to go astray in any of the bye-roads.

2. Temperance, or, as it is called by the Wiseman, sobriety, (Wisdom, viii. 7,) taken more properly is "the moderation and government of concupiscence or the love of pleasures, especially of those that consist in the senses of the taste and the touch." In this sense it is a cardinal virtue, or the source of a chain of many noble moral virtues, or the hinge, as it were on which they hang. The chief of these are mortification of the senses and of the passions, chastity, purity, virginity, abstinence and sobriety, meekness, poverty of spirit, contempt of the world, the rational study of useful sciences respecting every one's circumstances, the government of the tongue, modesty or the government of a man's exterior, humility, mourning or compunction, cleanness of heart, peace of mind. All this glorious train of sweet and amiable virtues are the attendants of holy temperance. These victorious conquerors of all the base passions of depraved nature, by which we govern ourselves, restrain the sallies of our corrupted hearts, triumph over our most dangerous and domestic enemies, and reign in happy interior peace within ourselves carrying their banners under her direction. These are the beautiful flowers, which grow in her garden and are cultivated by her care. They are delightful streams, all flowing from her fountain. The other three cardinal virtues are usually reckoned first, because many of their duties are public, and regard the commonwealth or others: but, though temperance may be placed last, its importance is not the less, as it is the principal and most difficult duty of every man, what-

[a] Dominium rationis in libidinem & omnes alios motus importunos.

ever his circumstances or his state may be, to govern well himself and keep his own powers and senses, especially his passions, in obedience to reason and virtue, and in good order. By this alone can he enjoy any true liberty or happiness, and be brought to acquit himself of all his duties whether to God, to his neighbour, or to himself. How am I enamoured with the very prospect of this holy temperance? How earnestly do I desire the happy possession of it, to make it the spouse of my soul, the constant companion of my life? Its very name fills me with rapturous delights.

3. It is temperance that prunes my soul, and pares away whatever is inordinate in me or in my affections. It cuts off and removes all that can defile my heart or senses, and preserves me pure and spotless from all that load of infamous stench and filth, which I carry about me from the corruption of sin. In so much that, as St. Bernard observes, (Serm 22, in Cant.) St. Paul calls temperance absolutely the virtue of holiness, as when he says, (1 Thess. iv. 3.) "This is the will of God, your sanctification, that every one of you may know to possess his vessel in holiness and honour, not in the passion of lust." And (v. 7,) "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." "It is evident," says that father, "that he uses holiness for temperance." The Divine Spirit chooses his dwelling in our souls. But it is by this virtue we must prepare them to be a lodging for so holy and great a guest, who is no less than holiness itself. His eyes infinitely pure cannot bear the sight of the least impurity. He flies from all that is defiled. With what care must I adorn with temperance both my soul and my body, the one being his chosen spouse, the other his living temple? The dread thought of his infinite sanctity and infinite jealousy must make me always with trembling remember to what I am bound in this particular.

4. Temperance was the tribute, which God exacted from man in the state of innocence, when he enjoined our first parents in paradise not to eat of; or touch the tree of knowledge, lest they should die. Gen. ii. Their transgression of this precept and virtue forfeited their privileges, and overwhelmed all their posterity in a deluge of woes, and excited this revolt of our passions against ourselves, which we now groan under. O singular privilege of temperance, to which God has annexed the conservation of those high prerogatives, for which we are created! O cursed intemperance, whose dire effects we feel in the loss of them!

Much more in our present fallen state is manifold temperance the homage we are bound to pay to God in testimony of our fidelity and obedience to him. It is also the means, by which we must tame and vanquish our revolted passions, recover and maintain our superiority over them, (the happiness which we lost with our innocence and original justice) give the most heroic proofs of our virtue and valour in the cause of God, and carry heaven by violence, which our base intemperance has shut against us. O happy virtue, that repairs the breaches made in our nature by sin, restores the calm of our affections and the peace of our minds, is the guardian of other virtues, crowns us with the most glorious trophies and victories, and carries heaven by violence. For "The kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." Matt. xi. 12.

5. We cannot coolly consider the direful mischiefs, which unthinking men every day draw upon themselves by intemperance, and not be struck with horror at the very name of so hideous a monster; such as innumerable sins,

the eternal loss of souls, feuds and quarrels both domestic and foreign, ruin of estates and families, premature old age and deaths, legions of cruel distempers more torturing than racks and wheels, grief, melancholy, and despair, uneasiness of friends, &c. from all which temperance preserves us. It frees us from the tyranny of insatiable desires, from grovelling beastly appetites and sensual affections, raises our souls above this earth, and transforms them into angels.

6. The principal opponents of temperance are prosperity, sensual pleasures, and the passions of the mind. It teaches us true moderation both of our affections and whole comportment under the favours of prosperity, which to most men is the most dangerous trial of life. When its gale has exalted them, they suffer themselves to be transported and made giddy with it, so as to forget themselves and lose their reason. They give a free loose to their intemperate joy, ascribe their good fortune to themselves, look upon it as a good, which is their own and is no more to be moved, set their hearts upon it, puffed up with vain joy and foolish pride, saying in themselves with Nebuchodonosor in his glory: "Am not I the great, the successful man!" They lose all foresight of dangers, and grasp still greedily at higher things, or fall a prey to other passions, till unforeseen ruin like a whirlwind often overtakes and buries them in the midst of their golden dreams, and sweeps them off in their unrepented sins, unless some stroke of adversity had first been able to awaken them and open their eyes. Drunk with its intoxication, and swollen with empty pride, they not only forget themselves; but often their friends also, to whom they become haughty, insolent, and insupportable, and are only open to false flatterers, such as are never wanting on such occasions, and who only contribute to hasten their misfortune.

St. Antoninus, (Sum. part. 4, tit. 3. c. 7, fol. 29,) observes, that concupiscence always inclines to evil within the soul: if prosperity exteriorly add its force to it, a man is drawn too violently to the danger by two powers together, the one exterior and the other interior: "On this account scarcely any one is found, who being in prosperity makes a good use of it." Whence Lactantius writes thus to Demetrian, a nobleman, who had once been his disciple, (l. de op. Dei, p. 672.) "I rejoice for your prosperity; but only if it make no change in the state of your mind. For I fear lest its sweetness or custom creep insensibly into your heart. Wherefore I admonish you, and repeat again and again my admonitions, that you look not upon the goods of this life as real goods, but as treacherous cheats, and as snares by which our enemy seeks to entrap us."

7. Many have stood firm and inflexible under adversity, and suffered its severest shocks with unshaken bravery and virtue; whom prosperity has shamefully vanquished. Trial awakens their courage, and rouses sentiments of generosity and piety in their breasts. It likewise brings great advantages and occasions of virtue. But caresses come not as an enemy to challenge to resistance, but as a treacherous friend. They are therefore received unwarily, and without precaution or mistrust; and as the power of charms is greater, though indeed more secret and consequently more dangerous, than those of frowns, they soften the mind, enervate its vigour and strength, blind its sight, and easily draw it into the most fatal precipices, as Dalilah betrayed and overcame the valiant Sampson, invincible to the Philistines.

Now temperance moderates the joy of prosperity, keeps down the spirits

from rising in airy flights, anchors the heart in true humility and distrust, and secures the soul against the dangers of that treacherous enemy to virtue and wisdom. As fortitude furnishes weapons and strength against adversity, so temperance supplies curbs against the dangers of prosperity. Armed with these two virtues, the servant of God receives and bears both these extremes with an unalterable evenness of mind, neither desponding under the one, nor presuming under the other, equally solicitous to improve all events, which providence shall appoint, into occasions of doing all the good in his power.

8. The means to obtain and preserve this steady temper of virtue under the dangers of the smiles of fortune, are, first, that a man do not look upon them as goods, as they never converted or made any one man good; nay, they are oftener the share of the wicked, and designed sometimes by God as their greatest spiritual punishment and curse. Secondly, nothing can be more slippery and inconstant than the possession of such advantages, which flow and ebb like the uncertain Euripus, and when withdrawn leave nothing but stench and mud behind them. Would any man stake his fortune on the stability of a weather-cock? It is no less foolish to set our hearts upon, or place our felicity in things so empty and so uncertain as are the goods of fortune. Thirdly, the most necessary rule of all others is, that a soul curb her inclination towards finding satisfaction in this prosperity, by entertaining the greatest fear and watchfulness under it, being sensible that it is a most slippery ground, on which without an extraordinary grace, it is impossible to tread sure. It is often a pit dug for the ruin of souls, and God's heaviest curse upon abandoned sinners. Isa. xxvi. 10. They are a poison presented in honey. Only this fear can be the antidote. Lastly, a person must always remember that we are here only passengers; accordingly we must set our hearts on nothing below heaven, and consider ourselves as strangers here. This motive St. Peter suggests as the most powerful, if we thoroughly penetrate our hearts with it: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul. 1 Pet. ii. 11. Frequent meditation on eternity, a contempt of the world, and fervent prayer are the most indispensible and sovereign means to procure this grace. A holy sadness or compunction of heart and gift of tears is its opposite virtue, but hard to be maintained under the illusion of temporal prosperity. It is nourished by the consideration of our sins and the sins of others, our present banishment and sighs for heaven, and the absence of our divine spouse and his grace.

9. Pleasure, especially that of the senses, is a second and main object of temperance. Pleasure in necessary and lawful functions of life is an holy institution of our wise Creator for our well-being: but since the deprivation of concupiscence by sin it has become the greatest bane of virtue, and the fiercest incitement to evil. It is the most violent attractive to the heart. It solicits to the most shameful crimes, and with an importunity not to be repelled but by violence to ourselves. Here it is that temperance exerts its most heroic force: here it is the buckler of our souls.

It would be too austere, and an error against both faith and reason, to assert that all pleasure is criminal. The body is framed by nature to find a delight in those actions, which are necessary to its being; and this delight is even inseparable from many of them. There are then some pleasures inseparable from life; and some others are also lawful, and may

be used in moderation, and without attachment, for a relaxation of the mind, the wholesome exercise of the body, or even as comforts allowed by nature sometimes to alleviate the cares and burdens of life. But then the intention must not rest in these motives; they must be farther referred to God and his holy will, (e. g.) that we may recruit our vigour to pursue our serious duties with greater alacrity and courage. For even the most innocent and most necessary pleasures will be in some degree sinful, if they are sought purely to gratify ourselves, by resting in their satisfaction, as St. Augustin proves at large in his books against Julian the Pelagian. Whence he says, (l. de mor. eccl. c. 21,) "A temperate man has this rule in the things of this life, that he loves nothing of them, seeks nothing of them for themselves, but makes use of them as much as suffices for the necessity of this life and duties." This is indeed a difficult point in practice: whence, though it be lawful to relish the pleasure in such actions, referring them farther to the will of God, yet the saints would choose to deny themselves such a pleasure, if not in some necessary action involving it, for fear their hearts should be tainted by it; yet this without too great a moroseness and inflexible austerity.

Besides this first condition of the intention not being terminated in the pleasure for itself, a second requisite to exempt it from sin is, that it be not sucked in with a vehement eagerness and greediness, or any attachment; as this is always inordinate, and (e. g.) in eating is the proper character of gluttony. To avoid this fault, many have by habit so mortified their senses as to pay no attention at all to what they eat, or to its taste, unless asked about it.

It is an essential precept also, never to use any lawful pleasure to excess, or in any other inordinate manner.

Nor yet are all these precepts sufficient: it is moreover absolutely necessary, that no one do allow himself too frequent use of lawful pleasures: for he would thus inevitably enervate his heart by them, and create in himself too unbridled a thirst after such delights, which would often draw him to excesses in them, and also in coveting such as are criminal in their own nature. This love of pleasure becomes entirely master of the heart by indulgence. The more perfectly is it mortified, the more easy and complete will be the victory over this dangerous enemy, which is cut off only by holy temperance. The senses of the taste and touch being the most wild and furious, if they are allowed to gain strength, and being the most easily inflamed, must be treated with particular severity.

10. The passions are principal objects of temperance, and to which even its other objects are referred. For it is chiefly to keep them in subjection that we mortify the senses. By a passion is meant a vehement motion excited in the sensitive part of the soul. Love is the principal, and in some measure the source of the others; for even anger arises from a love of the contrary object. The philosophers place six passions in the concupiscible part of the soul; for if any good be represented to it simply, it creates love: if it be considered as present, it excites joy: if as distant, desire. If an evil object be presented to the mind simply, it produces hatred: if as future and approaching, fear: if as present, grief, or, with regard to other persons, compassion. There are five in the irascible part, all which arise from some of the former, and are usually more vehement and raging. These regard the means of obtaining good or shunning evil; and are as follow. If the obtaining of the good, or avoiding of the evil

be considered as possible or impossible, there arises in us hope or despair: the prospect of a threatening future evil produces fear or courage: the horror of a present evil kindles anger and indignation. An imaginary good or evil has the same effect upon the mind as if it were real. Under love fall the passions of pride or inordinate love of our own excellence: ambition, or the love of power, riches, &c. and lust, or the love of carnal pleasures, and so of the rest.

The springs of the original passions are a wise institution of nature to give by them wings, or an extraordinary strength and vigour to the soul on occasions, which require greater vigour in her. She is by them raised above herself, and does things almost miraculous. She runs, finds nothing difficult, nothing impossible. They were then implanted in us to be helps to us in the prosecution of virtue, and especially love and hope; as long as they remain rational, sedate, and without any disturbance, they are most conducive to the health of the body, as they promote most powerfully the equable flow of its fluids. Their inordinateness arises from the sin of our first parents. They are in their origin from God; and the work came out of his hands pure and holy. How great is our misfortune, that these appetites should be so perverted in us?

11. Passions in the corruption of our nature are misplaced by us upon false objects, are seditious and unruly, hurtful to our souls, to our peace of mind, and to the health of our bodies. Our imagination considers false goods as real, and we exercise our love and other passions upon them, which ought to be employed on God and for virtue only. And whereas they were originally regular movements to good, always obedient to reason, now they wait not for her direction, nor even for any command of the will; but hurry the soul impetuously to their false objects, anticipating reason, which they were instituted only to follow. Nor does their evil stop here. Their tendency often carries to criminal objects; and their manner is likewise inordinate in the disturbance, vehemence, and other circumstances contrary to reason and virtue. Above all, they are seditious and openly rebellious against reason, opposing her laws, and refusing to obey her orders. She was established as queen to govern the soul; the passions were appointed to be her officers only to execute her just dictates; but they have shaken off their obedience, move without her command, nay refuse to listen to it, or desist from their unruly seditions at her voice. They set up for masters and tyrants, and, having shaken off the bridle and got the head, drag the poor soul down the most fatal precipices. So that, unless we hold these monsters always chained, we will certainly be undone by them. They are furious wild beasts, which, if once left unmuzzled, immediately tear in pieces and devour their keepers. We have reason to deplore the misery of man in this particular. Brute beasts governed by instinct are satisfied with what is necessary; they never torture themselves about imaginary evils, nor pursue imaginary goods: they do not run into the excesses of intemperance to the destruction of health and life, and are strangers to the extravagance and voluntary pangs, which men plunge themselves into. Nature uniform in them governs their actions, and restrains their cravings. But man, endowed with reason and lord of this lower creation, feels those conflicts and lust within himself, which the ass and the mule never suffer, and is often a voluntary slave to his own lawless desires, which master his reason. He has it indeed in his power from reason and grace to curb them by temperance, and maintain his empire

over himself. This he must do by mortifying them; first, by never placing them on objects, that are criminal, or empty and vain; secondly, by governing their appetites and restraining them; thirdly, by fixing them only on God and virtue.

12. This lawless tyranny of his passions not only drags him into sin, but overflows his heart with gall and wormwood, remorse, smart stings, fretting, and disquietudes. He often suffers more cruel pains and anguish from them in his soul than he could in his body from the severest racks; and the inward state of his mind is more disordered, when a prey to them, than a state torn in pieces by intestine convulsions and seditions. Imagine the miseries of a commonwealth in which the inferior officers refused obedience and subordination to their sovereign, and the subjects to both; and all were armed against one another, mutually to plunder and tear each other in pieces; all in such a state would be confusion, desolation, fear, pillage, slaughter, and distress, without any law, any sanctuary, any safety, or peace, either at home or abroad. This is but a faint image of the frightful disorders of a soul, in which all the powers and passions, instead of obeying reason, are at war with it, and with each other.

Add, that irregular passions are insatiable. The desires, which reason suggests, are limited and easily satisfied: but those, which are inordinate, stop no where: as a man out of the way may wander for ever, and not meet his term at last. These covetings like a dropsy increase, and grow more unsatisfied and tormenting by being the more indulged.

It is another misery of this jarring of the passions, that they fill the heart enslaved to them with restless disquietudes and commotions. The waves of the most tempestuous sea, worked up by the most furious hurricanes and storms, are not so furious or inconstant as its violent movements, often as vain and ridiculous as they are wicked and shameful. Oh! what is man, unless temperance tame and govern these monsters? Without this virtue he is an abyss of crimes, extravagancies, and miseries. He must by watchfulness prevent as much as possible the risings of the first motions of these fierce rebels, by which they so often anticipate the will. He must also by habitual mortifications always hold the reins.

13. The result of this holy temperance is the happy virtue of interior peace, by which the soul is joyfully subject to God, and, in what is good and just, to men, and by which she governs all her desires and appetites in the sole pursuit and love of virtue. This happy state is the paradise of the heart on earth, and its most acceptable sacrifice to God, who chooses to dwell only in such. "His place was made in peace." Ps. lxxv. 3. "Have peace, and the God of peace will be with you." 2 Cor. xiii. 11. This amiable virtue and temper is purchased by a most ready obedience to God, and, in all that is lawful, to men who are our superiors; by a cheerful resignation to providence under all events and afflictions; by condescension to all men as far as reason and virtue can allow, and sincere concord with all; by no way regarding the opinion, which others may form to our advantage or disadvantage, but studying unfeignedly to serve all whenever in our power, and watching over ourselves to give no one any scandal or offence, as much as possible; by bearing patiently injuries and the evils we cannot remedy; by a purity of conscience from sin, and by the victory of our passions through the help of constant mortifications and watchfulness.

This is the victory, than which nothing can be greater or more glorious. The valour of Alexander, Cæsar, Augustus, and other great conquerors of

the world is pitiful meanness of spirit, compared to this. All those heroes were base slaves to their unruly passions. That fortitude is much more rare, more our own growth, and alone truly illustrious and advantageous both in time and eternity, by which a man overcomes his passions, commands himself, and gives to reason and virtue the absolute command over his heart and all his powers. "A patient man is better than the stout; and he who commands his own soul than the conqueror of cities." Prov. xvi.

Temperance takes in the government of all our selfish affections and passions; it includes humility, modesty, chastity, and what is more strictly called temperance or moderation in the desire and use of meat and drink. The author of our being has planted in us desires towards those objects, which are necessary for the preservation and conveniency of life. But as the high ends of our being are not confined to the present state, and we are endowed with nobler powers and affections, by which we are determined to the pursuit of more excellent objects, wherein our true perfection and happiness consists, it is plain that these inferior appetites were ordained to be in subjection to reason, and restrained within such limits as to be consistent with our superior end. See James i. 14, 15. Luke xxi. 34. By a stupid indulgence of sensual appetites, the minds of men become so degenerate as to lose all relish of those infinitely superior objects, for which they were created. Phil. iii. 19. Rom. xvi. 18. Nourishment is appointed by God to repair the daily wastes of the body, and preserve its organs to minister to the proper offices of life. But by intemperance the superior powers of the soul are clogged; health as well as the heart is overcharged with surfeiting; the faculties of nature are overloaded, and indisposed for their proper functions. To eat and drink, without a view and subordination to the proper ends, is to be guilty of intemperance; it is not to eat and drink, "to the glory of God," as the Apostle directs. Solomon pronounces the land happy, whose princes eat in due season, &c. Eccles. x. 17. It is in the superiority of the soul, in its freedom, and in the dominion of reason and conscience over the lower desires and passions, that this virtue chiefly consists. It is therefore seated in the mind, as every virtue must be; though it requires this exterior restraint.

How base for man to degrade himself to the situation of brutes, and render himself mean, contemptible, and miserable! Temperance fits us for a heavenly life. 1 Pet. i. 13. It is a great preservative from snares and temptations. 1 Thess. v. 6. 1 Pet. v. 8. 1 Cor. ix. 34.

A resolution neither to be shocked by the difficulties of our present state, nor softened by its pleasures, nor terrified by its pains, so as to be diverted from our duty, must accompany our whole conduct, giving to each part all diligence. 2 Pet. i. 5. It is not to be confined to one point, but must run through the whole detail of the duties, giving all diligence to every virtue, all diligence to attain knowledge, all diligence in the exercise of patience, temperance, godliness, and charity. To this the divine assistance will always be given, which never supersedes the necessity of our own endeavours, but is always united with them. As David, giving charge to Solomon concerning that good work of building the temple, thus encourages him: "Arise, and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee." 1 Chron. xxii. 16. God does not deal with us as unintelligent machines, but as rational creatures. He does not make us happy without our own knowledge, choice, and concurrence; and never gives the least countenance to

supine negligence. In the affairs of common life, "the hand of the diligent maketh rich; and he becomes poor, that deals with a slack hand." Prov. x. 4. It is more so with virtue, where the difficulty is greater from the many infirmities, that encompass us. These are no arguments for sloth or discouragement; on the contrary, they should incite us to greater zeal and activity, according to Solomon's proverbial expression: "If the iron be blunt, he must put it to the more strength." Eccl. x. 10. See Prov. ii. 3. Besides diligence in making use of all means, and earnestness in the vigorous exertion of all our powers and strength, constancy is required. For these obligations are extended to every virtue, and equally bind us at every time. Our resolution must be stedfast and permanent, not like the warm but abortive zeal of those, who receive the word with joy, but only endure for awhile; for when "affliction and temptation ariseth, they are offended." Mat. xiii. 20, 21. "Their diligence is as the morning cloud, and the early dew that passeth away." Osee vi. 4.

Fortitude is called virtue, or courage. For it carries in it the idea of hazards and difficulties, and the excellence of it consists in a magnanimous superiority over all dangers and opposition. To sink under difficulties, and not to pursue good purposes against them, is to have no goodness at all. The gospel represents this state as a warfare, nay as a continual fight. 1 Tim. vi. 12. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit." A multitude of unreasonable and impetuous inclinations tending to sin take their rise from the body. These must be resisted, and all our passions and desires regulated and restrained. This is one of the most arduous duties of religion, and requires the utmost vigour and firmest resolution of our souls. Again, the world, or the corrupt part of mankind, acts in opposition to the spirit of the gospel. Our Saviour states that an irreconcileable enmity exists between the world and his followers, and shows they are always to expect hatred, ill usage, and injuries from it. How difficult must it be to stand unmoved against a train of sufferings, against galling reproaches, despiteful rage, and all manner of wrongs, and still to maintain integrity, meekness, and patience? It is is further to be considered, that invisible malignant powers have, by divine permission, great influence upon the affairs of this world, and instigate to evil. Eph. i. 2, vi. 12. He, who fights manfully, does not shrink, nor draw back at every wound, much less on every threatening or danger, but maintains his station, and goes on in his course, resolving to conquer. 2 Tim. ii. 3.

DISCOURSE LII.

ON MORTIFICATION.

As the mystery of the cross was a scandal and a folly to the Jews and Gentiles, so is now the practice of it even to many christians. They acknowledge it to be the instrument of salvation and the only road to bliss, yet in the practice of their lives are no less openly its adversaries than the Pagans, as they are no less eager in seeking their own ease and satisfaction, and denying no delight to their senses, which they can crave. Every one seems to look upon himself as born only to enjoy ease and pleasure,

Old and young, rich and poor, nobles and labourers run after this ever delusive charm, according to their inclinations, and think this their portion, and that all suffering is an injustice to them. If they refrain from unlawful pleasures, they imagine they do their duty to God. But religion gives us very different ideas; "The kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." Mat. xi. 12.

In that happy state of innocence, in which man was created, God was his centre; and his soul with all her powers was carried to love him in all things, and this with pleasure and ease. "God made man upright." Eccl. viii. 30. The senses conveyed no allurements to unlawful pleasures or excesses; and the inferior or sensitive part of the soul received no impressions but what were conformable to the superior or to reason, which it obeyed, and to which it was always subject; nor had man within himself any concupiscence, or any irregular appetite able to excite any disorderly motion or temptation; the rule of rectitude alone engaged and commanded all his powers and senses; but the soul having revolted against God by sinning, her sensitive appetite rebelled against her own reason and often, even against her will, excites such motions or affections as she herself condemns. "The evil which I will not, that I do." Rom. viii. 19. Thus, as a just punishment of his disobedience to his Creator, man finds his body, and the sensitive appetite in his soul, rebellious against his own reason; both putting obstacles to his good desires, and also stirring up in him irregular ones. Thus "the flesh lusts against the spirit." Gal. v. 17. This rebellion of his own faculties creates in him a continual intestine war, which God permits for our perpetual humiliation and for our trial, as he left the Jebusites amidst the Jews for their exercise.

This jarring and repugnance of our passions with reason, and this propensity of our depraved nature to evil lay us under a necessity of the constant practice of mortification to subdue them, and keep them within the bounds of submission and obedience. By it, pride is to be overcome, self-love and inordinate affection to creatures rooted out, and all our passions restrained. If ever the curb be removed, they break loose and become ungovernable. To think of gratifying them constantly in what may seem in itself not criminal, and still to hope to have them under command in the time of violent temptations, is to pretend not to have sinned in Adam, not to have contracted this universal contagion of mankind, to be privileged against our spiritual enemies, and exempt from the common law of God's providence in the promises of his graces and of his glory; for he has annexed them to this means. It is only by our fidelity in the practice of it, that we can obtain his strength and be crowned by him with victory. We may prolong our prayers, frequent the sacraments, and multiply good works; it is all in vain, if we join not mortification. Our passions are tigers, which always grow fiercer by being soothed. Who ever caresses and fortifies an enemy against himself? It is a man's study always to weaken and reduce him. This is above all, true of our spiritual enemies, and chiefly our domestic ones. We are, of ourselves, too weak for them, and have no other means to procure the protection of God.

Experience shows how furious concupiscence becomes by being flattered, even in little things. Passions might be easily curbed in children; but their first little inclinations to pride, vanity, anger, sloth, love of pleasure, &c. by being indulged grow stronger and stronger, and form tyrannical habits, which often govern men in all their thoughts and actions. Their

senses, as it were, of their own accord, eagerly catch at all objects, that are agreeable to them, whether vicious or innocent. The will also seeks to please itself in all things, and all a man's powers become to him continual and violent tempers to evil. Concupiscence heightens the acts in them to a degree almost irresistible, as it acts with quickness, and with impetuosity. With quickness; for, as it is in some measure the operation of nature itself, so this state of corruption, and of nature fortified by habit, seizes its object, or excites its inclination without deliberation; as fire, which acts naturally, burns in the very instant it falls on matter disposed to receive it. Thus it often waits not for the command of the slow will, nor the process of a deliberation; by its promptitude, it prevents both the understanding and the will, and gathers the first fruits, or, to speak more properly, sows the first seed of the disorderly affection, before it appears. Though this motion, when entirely indeliberate and invincible, is not sinful, it is still a great misery; it may also be sinful in its cause, which may be wilful in unmortified souls. We must add, that the will and reason being prevented by the sensitive part are in great danger of being drawn into a partnership, and a soul of becoming guilty by some degree of consent. For the will to be victorious, it must snatch the act back out of the hands of the enemy, as of a thief who has already seized it. Now mortification prevents at least such inordinate motions being frequent and violent. It keeps this enemy in subjection and obedience; if it make any sallies of this nature, the will, by habitual mortification, easily, and as it were, naturally, is ready to suppress them. It is perpetually watching over itself against such motions, and is always ready armed against them, and will not easily take any part in them.

Secondly, concupiscence is also strong and violent, often obstinate in its assaults, and, unless weakened by mortification, becomes morally irresistible. God has, indeed, subjected it to the command of free-will; "its appetite shall be under thee." Gen. iv. 7. But he has made mortification the condition of this command; this power he owes to his strength in this war, and it is the means, to which God has promised his graces. He has established it to be our spiritual armour both offensive and defensive.

If we add, that concupiscence never ceases laying snares and making assaults upon us, we shall see the necessity of continual mortification to be still greater. Were it confined to certain actions, times, or places, our vigilance might allow us some moments of respite; but as it never interrupts its efforts, and is always weighing us down, we must never be wearied in always labouring to subdue it, and nothing less than an indefatigable courage in mortification can resist it. Alas! Without this, it infects all our actions, even our virtues. Every thing in us will be corrupted; not one fibre in our hearts, not one affection will remain pure; its contagion will be universal over all our faculties, and spread itself in a greater or lesser degree through all our actions and thoughts, and, acquiring daily new strength, it will grow continually more triumphant in us.

Men say, our senses and inclinations may be gratified in pleasurses, which are lawful and moderate. It is true that we may use, in temperance, some lawful comforts of this life, without passion or inordinate attachment to them. But, if we do this with eagerness or too often, it will be both criminal and pernicious. If we accustom our will or senses to please themselves, so as very rarely to contradict them, they will be insatiable, and will always burn with an itching after what is agreeable to them, and

after unlawful satisfactions, and it will be no more in our power to command them, or stop our desires within the just bounds of virtue and temperance, than to rise a dike to hem the swelling waves of the sea. "If thou givest to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies." Eccl. xviii. 31. On passions Bernetz says, (t. 1, 13, 175.) "Mortification, by procuring us the command over passions, purchases us the sweetest peace and the greatest enjoyment of life. Their reign in us fills us with an insatiable, cruel, and tormenting thirst, gnaws and tears us inwardly without ceasing, and makes our hearts the most frightful scene of disorder and confusion. Men in such a state groan under the most insupportable slavery and its heavy load, without being sensible of it. Could we see such a heart naked, we would pity and abhor it. Such is the state of a soul, a prey to her passions. God could not create man to be so miserable. No, he reduces himself to such a condition. God leaving him subject to passions, since the disorder he has brought upon himself by sin, has instituted and taught him a means not to be hurt by them, but to make them a matter of his triumph. This is mortification. If the remedy seem bitter, we must remember the violence and miseries of our diseases, and we shall think it pleasant and easy. Physicians lay open the dangers and obstinacy of a distemper to magnify the cure, and to recommend the strength of their medicines. If we consider the frightful disorders of the passions, and sound the depth of those spiritual maladies, we shall embrace the cure with joy, and extol the incomparable sweetness of its effects. Ah! he, who has indulged his flesh and inclinations, is not enabled to brook the inevitable severities, contradictions, and disappointments, which all must meet in this life. What furies does he feel in his breast under them? What trouble, rage, and disturbances? If we see a child humoured and pampered in all things from the cradle, we may cry out: What affliction and bitterness do his good parents prepare one day for themselves! What miseries for their spoiled favourite! The time will come when he will repay their indulgence with its proper fruits, and when he shall suffer in himself their direful effects. On the contrary, one who from his cradle has been taught to refuse many things to his senses and inclinations, and to curb his desires, enjoys a calm and peace, which is unalterable, and by the amiable sweetness of his happy temper, easily triumphing over all passions, charms all others by his virtue, and the marks thereof, which shine in his very countenance, and the happiness of which he tastes in his own breast. O sweet fruit, an happy recompense of holy mortification. Sin created disorder in man's soul and body, and subjects it to a revolt, and a perpetual war within itself; mortification removes that jarring, takes away in a great measure that disorder, and restores in part the due subordination, which man possessed in himself in original justice; and it is part of the happiness of that state. As we cure the body by purging its superfluous and noxious humours, so we heal the soul by cutting off its evil appetites and desires, as Plato says in his Georgia."

If continual mortification be essentially necessary as a preservative against sin, it is no less so as the means requisite to repair past sins. We are sinners, and bound to do penance. Now this requires works of mortification, which must be the fire, by which we sacrifice our members to God, repair the injuries we have committed against God by them, and make them serve justice. "As you have yielded your members to serve unclean-

ness and iniquity to iniquity; so now yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification." Rom. vi. 19. As our life is to be a continual penance, so must it be a continual martyrdom of mortification. Also daily sins require daily remedies. The just, even the most perfect, have always superfluous affections to retrench and cut off.

To be engrafted in Christ, and made his members, we must bear his image, which is to be framed by mortification in our soul; by it, the love of the world and the image of the old Adam is to be effaced; it is the pencil, which must form the new man in us. By its daily operation, we must every day be enabled to say more and more perfectly: "I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me." Gal. ii. 20. To be always crucified, always dying to ourselves, is the great work, by which this change must be continually more and more perfected; it is that, to which we have bound ourselves in baptism, wherein we engaged ourselves to this daily death to the old man, to imitate the death of Christ. "All we, who were baptized in Christ, were baptized in his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism into death." Rom. vi. 3, 4.

By the continual exercise of mortification, we must likewise bear a resemblance with Christ, who, though he stood not in need of mortification for himself, or to subdue any passions, which, in him, with all his senses and powers, were most perfectly obedient to reason and grace, yet, to purchase this remedy for us and give us an example, he was pleased to lead the most mortified, laborious, and painful life on earth. "Christ did not please himself," Rom. xv. 3, though his will was ever holy. And as to exterior mortification of the body, he chose to be born in the coldest season of the year, and to be subjected to its severities, and to all corporal wants, laid in a manger, in an open stable, deprived even of those comforts, which are not denied to the most miserable. Only eight days old he would undergo the painful ceremony of circumcision, and begin so soon to spill his blood. His hidden life during thirty years was for the most part spent in manual labour. When he left this state, he entered into a wilderness; and there, without any house to shelter him from the weather and serve as a retreat, he spent forty days in a rigorous fast, without taking any nourishment, employing the power of his divinity to preserve his life under that severity, but not to abate the suffering of it, or the pain of hunger. If his public life appeared less austere than that of St. John Baptist, it was composed of self-denials, mortification, sufferings in laborious journeys, fatigues, sweats, poverty, reproaches, and often wants of necessaries, not having a place to lay his head on. And in what sufferings and humiliations did he not close his mortal life? All for our example. "Think diligently upon him, that endureth such opposition against himself from sinners, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds; for you have not yet resisted unto blood." Heb. xiii. 3, 4. "He is the way, the truth, and the life." John xiv. 6

Mortification not only expels and overcomes vice, but obtains also the most special heavenly gifts of God, who crowns them with victory over the passions. He is always ready to bestow them upon us; but the obstacles of our irregular affections and passions stop his liberal hand. Spiritual and carnal affections are opposite to one another, and can never be joined together. The flesh is nourished with visible things, and delights in corruption; the spirit only with spiritual and incorruptible objects. Whence the apostle says, that "flesh and blood shall not possess

the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. xv. 15. No man sows seed on ground over-run with thorns and weeds, but he first rids and cleanses it. Neither does God bestow his heavenly seed on an unmortified heart, filled with earthly affections, which would choke it. Mortification must first dispose the soul. It dispels the darkness, which clouds the understanding, by cutting off impure and superfluous affections and desires. Thus it procures heavenly light in the understanding, which instructs and directs, teaching, in an effective and clear manner, the evils of sin and the paths of virtue, not in mere words, which only sound in the ear, or speculatively fill the mind.

In like manner, it purifies the will from the clogs of earthly affections, and obtains for it the heavenly fire of spiritual affections and divine love. That high mountain cannot be approached, nor even seen by heavy souls drowned in the flesh; mortification strips them of it, and gives the will wings to mount to God, as it purifies the eyes of the understanding to contemplate him.

Nor is there any virtue which can be acquired, even in the lowest degree, without the help of mortification, which must prune away the opposite vicious affections, that spring from concupiscence, and which fight against every virtue. As the superfluous branches must be pruned off the vine, or it can produce no good grapes; so neither can our souls bring forth the good fruits of virtue, unless pruned and cultivated with much greater care. It would be easy to show this by an induction of every particular virtue. "Man knows not its price; nor is it found in the land of those that live daintily." Job xxviii. 13.

Again; Every virtue requires heroic acts, which cannot be exercised without mortifying corrupt nature. We cannot be humble, chaste, patient, meek, &c. but by mortification, which is the general means of all virtue, both to perform courageously its most difficult acts, and to remove its obstacles. The garments of the old Adam cannot be thrown off without violence, nor the acts of the new be practised often without difficulty.

Mortification is particularly necessary to obtain the great gift of prayer. To contemplate or pray with attention, and pure inflamed affections, the great condition is purity of heart, free from earthly desires and affections. These are dust, which cloud the spiritual eyes of the soul, and defile the bed of the heart.

God's delight is to communicate himself to men, and to fill their hearts; but he is a jealous spouse, and cannot enlighten an understanding, or place his delights in a heart, which are not totally his. The tumult of passions, and the filth and stench of disorderly affections, indispose a soul for his conversation. It was the saying of the admirable abbot Nilus: "Whatever you bear patiently, you find the fruit of it in prayer." St. Ignatius of Loyola, hearing a person called a man of great contemplation, corrected the words thus: "Say rather a man of great mortification;" expressing the root or source of his rare gift of prayer. Mortification and prayer are the two great means of christian perfection, which is begun, increased, and completed by them, and they mutually assist each other. Mortification disposes to prayer, and this again perfects the mortification, especially of the interior powers. Its business is to beg, that they be more and more and more purified.

Mortification, accompanied with prayer, is the great means of christian perfection. The unmortified may multiply prayers, alms, and all other

good works; but they lose the greater part of the merit of these virtues, through the mixture of self-love and passions, and will always be at a great distance from even the sight of perfect virtue or pure love of God. They can never say to God entirely and without reserve, with the prophet: "I am yours." Ps. cxviii. 94. This is an easy word, and very common; Facilis vox & communis videtur, as St. Ambrose says in Ps. cxviii. Serm. 12, n. 37. Men may easily persuade themselves that they borrow these words of the prophet sincerely, but how few understand them? few penetrate their sense or extent; few repeat them truly. Facilis vox, sed paucorum, ib. Only those are to be expected, who are universally mortified to themselves and to all creatures; who love only God, and seek no other inheritance or portion in their hearts but him alone.

God bestows all his special graces and gifts only on the mortified. If a king should desire to favour, or even adopt the son of some slave, he would first require, that the youth should free himself from all his rustic manners and dispositions, change his dress, and then begin to appear at court. So God requires the soul to be rid of her carnal affections. Indeed they are opposite to his grace, nor are they compatible with it; they delight only in what is visible and corruptible, as the senses themselves are; but God's spirit cleaves only to what is invisible, spiritual, and eternal. It is then not to be communicated to a soul, not disposed by mortification to receive it. And the more mortified a soul is, in the same degree does she advance more in spiritual light, divine love, and other gifts.

Mortification is a voluntary painful affliction, or self-denial for virtue. That, which is found in resisting vice, is of precept; as is also so much of the free acts of this virtue as is necessary to satisfy for sin, to subdue the passions, and to enable us to comply with all our duties. For these ends there is a strict obligation of exercising frequent acts both of interior and exterior mortification, over and above those particular acts, which obedience to the church or to superiors, or the particular circumstances, in which we live, enjoin us. This is a precept of the law of nature, and of the gospel or positive law of God. It has pleased almighty God not to determine clearly the bounds, which are of precept, in regard to each particular matter, and this that no one might dare to fix to himself any in the practice of virtue, which every one is bound to make the exercise of his whole life, and not to imagine his martyrdom finished but with his last breath. The most perfect, and those who have acquired the greatest mastery over themselves, would soon lose it, were they to let go the reins. Our passions can be subdued, but never extirpated; they always live within us, like fire hidden under the ashes, which blazes out again, if set free. Weeds in a garden, or superfluous branches in the vine, grow again, unless they are always kept low.

Mortification is two-fold; one called exterior, which is occupied in subduing the body, the tongue, and the senses; the other is called interior, which bridles the will, and governs the affections, thoughts, and imagination. For man consists of these two parts, and has a conflict to sustain in each, a resistance from each in the practice of virtue and extirpation of vice. Concupiscence resides in the inordinate tendency of the soul to evil; but the senses are the windows, through which it is inflamed, and the body is its chief incentive. Both therefore are to be restrained by the constant practice of this double mortification; and, according to the measure of our progress herein, chiefly in the interior mortification and humility, we shall

advance in the love of God. It will reign in us in proportion as we shall die to ourselves and to created things. The diminution of concupiscence is the increase of charity; where perfect charity reigns, there is no concupiscence; St. Augustin, l. 83, qu. 31. If a man should, with great labour, have amassed an apparently large heap of virtue, without dying to himself, it would be only an empty show and outside, concealing a fund of secret self-love.

If we desire that concupiscence should not burn and consume us, mortification must extinguish its flames. If we wish to extirpate sin in our hearts, and subdue our passions, mortification must destroy the one, and tame the other. If we pray to be enlightened and inflamed, and enriched from above to know and love good and spiritual things, it is by mortification we must be prepared for such gifts. "Souls without it," says St. Basil, (or 21,) "are like heavy birds, which have indeed wings, but are too bulky to rise from the earth with them." As mortification must begin a spiritual life, so a progress in it must be its advancement and perfection. Whence Christ says of his Father: "Every branch, which beareth fruit, he will prune, that it may bring more fruit." John xv. 2. "For if they were not clean (by mortification) they could not bring fruit; and if they were not cleansed and pruned more and more, they could not bring more fruit. Wherefore he prunes more and more those, that are clean and fruitful, that they may produce more fruit as they become more pruned. But those, which are not pruned, become barren:" says St. Austin, Tr. 80, in Joan.

Though interior mortification be the more noble and the more essential part, it cannot subsist without the exterior, and it would be an error in faith to deny the necessity and obligation of the latter. And as its acts consist in actions, which are exterior and sensible, the occasions of exercising them are more palpable, consequently more easily seized; which is an advantage it possesses above that, which is interior and spiritual, the acts of which are to be facilitated by it. It would be a false pride and presumption for any one to pretend to true interior mortification, without the assistance of the exterior.

The latter is also necessary in itself: our body having been the instrument of sin must be the victim of repentance, and be punished by mortification. Secondly, as Christ suffered in his body, so are we to suffer in our criminal ones, crucifying our flesh, that we may live by his spirit, and "fill up those things, that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in our flesh." Col. ii. 4. "Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth; for you are dead. Mortify therefore your members, which are upon the earth." Col. iii. 2, 3, 5. Thirdly, every mortification is an agreeable sacrifice to God, a seed of an immense glory to come, and a means to procure for our souls inward strength and grace. "Though our outward man be corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For that, which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. This is what the apostle conjures to do by the most endearing motives of God's mercy, his darling attribute. "I beseech you by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service." Rom. xii. 1.

Fourthly, intemperance is to be restrained. All its pernicious consequences are so many motives for our mortification. When the Israelites

had impatiently desired flesh and been fed with quails in the wilderness, whilst the meat was yet in their mouths, the Lord struck them, and the place was called the sepulchres of concupiscence. Num. xi. 33, 34. The wise man prays: "Lord, take from me concupiscence of the belly, and let not concupiscence of lust seize me, and deliver me not to an unbridled and undisciplined soul." Eccl. xxiii. 6. These evils mortification only can deliver me from. It alone can allay the heat of those passions, preserve us from their furious assaults, or make us victorious under them. Fifthly, it prepares the soul to receive grace and heavenly wisdom, "which is not found in the land of those who live daintily." Job xxviii. 13.

Lastly, the flesh is our enemy, and opposes us in the service of God, if it be pampered and treated delicately. It is an adversary, the most implacable, the most inveterate, and the most dangerous. It every where follows us, nor can we fly from it. Mortification is the armour, that God has given us against it. If we neglect it, and cherish this treacherous serpent, we are sure to fall by it. "He, who nourishes his servant delicately from his childhood, shall afterwards find him stubborn." Prov. xxix. 21. The body was given us to be the slave of the soul, and to obey reason and God in all things. It proudly rebels against both, would be master, and enslave my spiritual and immortal soul. Shall I tamely submit it to such a tyranny? "I am too great, and born to too great things, to be the slave of my body," as the heathen philosopher could say; Seneca, ep. 65. "A wise man is not the lover, but the steward of his body, as of a necessary burthen." Id. ep. 92.

DISCOURSE LIII.

ON THE MORTIFICATION OF THE TASTE BY TEMPERANCE IN EATING AND DRINKING.

1. THE taste being the source of all the sins of gluttony and drunkenness, a sense in itself fierce and vehement, and of daily necessity and danger to us, great solicitude is requisite to keep it in due subjection by assiduous mortification; without which it gradually precipitates into the most ruinous and shameful extravagances and crimes. And it is the duty of a christian not only to guard himself against great excesses, but also to correct all the abuses of every action, and to give it the entire perfection, which virtue and religion prescribe. Now there is no action in life more subject to disorders than that of eating and drinking, as our own experience must make us sensible; consequently there is none, in which there is a greater necessity of practising continually the holy virtue of temperance. This is so much allowed by all, that in common we call this simply and absolutely temperance, as its most necessary and daily act, though to our disgrace and shame it is the most transgressed. Christians forget that their bodies are holy, consecrated to God, living temples of his divine spirit, and sully them with bruitish excesses. They forget that the dignity of a rational creature raises man above the slavery of his sensual appetites, and so far degrade themselves as to run after them. They forget, that they are born for heaven and spiritual joys, and by their carnal desires make themselves

incapable of them, nay make themselves earthly and carnal. They forget even God himself, and the spiritual homage which they owe to him, to drown themselves in their senses. They forget the cross of Christ, by which they were redeemed, in which they profess to believe and call themselves his followers, while in practice they are apostates from it, and walk enemies to it; "whose end is eternal damnation, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame; who mind earthly things," as St. Paul says of such, Phil. iii. 18, 19. Their conversation ought to be in heaven and their hearts spiritual; but by their appetites they grovel on the earth, not raising themselves above boasts, nay abusing their reason buried in their lusts, degrading themselves far beneath them, wallowing in excesses, of which nature makes the brutes incapable; making their basest part, their bellies, their divinity, and giving their main attention to satisfy their corruptible flesh in its basest desires, to the disgrace not only of religion, but of human nature itself. The greater part of mankind forget their reason, and what they are capable of, their God and religion, and the end for which they received their being, to drown and lose their nobler part, and their superior faculties, and to live as if they had no other employment no other errand on earth, than to pamper and fatten their bodies. Am I of this ignoble number, this reproach of the creation![a]

2. We must eat to repair and maintain the strength of our bodies, that we may be able to perform the functions and duties of life, and the employment of our station, to the honour of God. The action then is natural and necessary; but it must be referred to God's glory, and performed in a manner worthy of so great an intention. "Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." 1 Cor. x. 31. As it proceeds from the concupiscible appetite, it easily contracts some of its poisonous qualities. Nature has annexed a pleasure to it for a good end; but concupiscence, or the inordinate desire of the pleasure of the senses, is easily caught by this bait. It is a spark, by which that irregular appetite is in great danger of being set in a flame, and nothing but a perfect habit of the mortification of this sense, and of watching over it, can secure us from this danger. "Whereas health is the end of eating and drinking, a dangerous pleasure joins itself as an attendant," says St. Aug. (Conf. B. 10, c. 31, n. 2,) "and it generally seeks to go before, and to make me do that for its sake, which I either say I do or desire to do for health." Though this pleasure in what is taken for necessity, and with a pious intention, be good and lawful; "the weakness of our body standing in need not only of meat, but also of the taste of meat," as St. Aug. says, (l. 4, cont. Jul. c. 14, n. 67, t. 10, p. 616,) yet it is dangerous unless we watch ourselves; for it is apt to make us eat for its sake, or to set our hearts upon it; or to exceed in quantity or in the manner of eating; in so much that we may look upon our meals as usually the most dangerous action of the day. Yet christian temperance teaches us to retrench all their defects, and by what means we are to sanctify them.

3. Intemperance is a vice, against which the greatest and most mortified servants of God are always obliged to arm themselves. Even in the state of innocence this was the gate, through which sin entered into our first parents; the devil knew no more alluring bait than this joined with pride to overthrow man in his state of original purity, nor did it fail him. When he admired the invincible virtue of the Son of God himself on earth,

[a] Nos numerus sumus, & fruges consumere nati. Virg.

and presumed to attempt an assault upon him, it was by this temptation that he began to assail him. The most perfect men in all virtue, the holy fathers of the desert, never thought themselves secure from this vice, and therefore, to be more remote from its attacks, studied to make their nourishment as insipid and even painful as possible, thus to cut off the occasions, which the enemy might use as engines to tempt them with. The great St. Augustin, after his conversion, declares, that, though he had broken the chains of his other passions, and found himself at rest from them, he still had strenuous and dangerous struggles to maintain against intemperance. "In these temptations," says he, "I strive daily against the inordinate appetites of eating and drinking, and who is there, O Lord, who is not some little drawn beside the bounds of necessity? Whosoever he be, he is a great man; let him magnify thy name. I am not such a one, because I am a sinful man."[a]

4. The fathers lay it down as a rule, that the first step to mortification and virtue is a vigorous opposition to this passion, and that, as long as a man has not begun this work, he has not so much as entered the lists. The reason is, because intemperance and sensuality clog the soul, and wed her affections to the earth in such a manner that she is not capable of heavenly sentiments. She is such as her affections are, beastly and immersed in the senses. Instead of commanding the body, she makes it her tyrannical master, and delights herself in its base gratifications. Whence our Saviour says: "Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with intemperance." Luke xxi. 34. Thus the immortification of the palate is the death of all virtues and spiritual affections; whence St. Gregory the great, (l. 30, c. 26) says: "No one obtains the trophy of any spiritual victory, who has not first overcome the appetites of the flesh by the mortification of the belly. Whilst this is not restrained, all virtues are overwhelmed and destroyed together by the concupiscence of the flesh." And St. Isidore, (l. de sum. bono, l. 2, c. 22.) "No one can attain the perfection of virtue, unless he has first mastered the passion of gluttony." Therefore St. Basil, (l. de vera virgin,) orders the virgin, whom he is leading to virtue, to begin by temperance, before all other things, to tame the desires of this vice.

5. Men's virtue being interior and residing in their hearts is invisible; but we have an exterior mark of it; for their temperance and abstemiousness, where nothing else belies its sincerity, shows their inward mastery over all their appetites, and how far they are advanced in true virtue. As long as simplicity, integrity, honesty, and other moral virtues reigned in the world, so long plainness and temperance were the character of the ages; as is visible from the manners of the ancient patriarchs. The wisest legislators thought no precautions too great to put an eternal bar to the entrance of luxury, being very sensible how close and necessary a connection there is between sobriety and all other virtues; and so long did those commonwealths stand and flourish, as these wholesome laws were rigorously observed. Witness the remarkable severity of the Lacedemonians; witness the Persian empire, and the commonwealths of Greece and Rome. And if we look narrowly into the histories of all nations and kingdoms, we shall see visibly that luxury and gluttony immediately open a wide gate to all vices and to an entire corruption of heart. Hence our

[a] Quisquis est, magnus est; magnificet nomen tuum. Ego autem non sum, quia peccator homo sum. Conf. l 10, c. 31, n. 6.

divine legislator exacts so strict and eminent a temperance and sobriety in all his followers, and inculcated these precepts so strongly not only by words, but still more by example. For this he led a poor, mortified, and suffering life in hunger, thirst, cold, &c. When fatigued from his journeys, he begs only a little water of the Samaritan woman; and this only to have an occasion of converting her from her evil courses; nor do we read that he drank of it. When on the cross he tasted gall and vinegar. And all the saints tread in the same path, from St. John Baptist in his wilderness down to the end of time, whoever desires to enrol their names among his true disciples. "They, that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the vices and concupiscences." Gal. v. 24.

6. Divines, with St. Gregory the great, usually assign five ways of sinning by gluttony, viz., by eating out of the due times of regularity and decency; or too daintily; or too much; or greedily; or with too great nicety in the cookery. Temperance is armed against each temptation with particuliar remedies. Against the first, temperance must prescribe certain regular times in the day for meals. In the more early ages, before luxury had enervated the minds and bodies of men, custom made all persons content themselves with one meal a-day, in the evening, and that on simple plain diet. The laws of the Lacedemonians severely forbad any one to eat in private: even the kings, unless with leave of the Ephori, a kind of censors, on the first night after their return from some notable victory, were obliged to sup in public with the people on a black soup and other coarse fare. Though nature be still the same, customs are much altered, and the habits of men by a contrary use are now very different. However to make but one hearty meal a day is certainly most agreeable to nature; many specious reasons are alleged by learned men in preference of supper with regard to robust healthy persons; but dinner must be necessarily chosen by all of weak constitutions, or rather that every meal be but a light refection in proportion as the weakness of nature can bear in them. Regularity in the times of meals, and that they be not thrown late into the night, are points very conducive to health and agreeable to nature. This then ought to be prescribed by temperance. And it is a part of this virtue to be exact to these hours, as far as circumstances and a reasonable liberty will permit: also, not to eat or drink easily out of them; not to anticipate them without necessity: not to suffer the mind to run upon them before; not to run to the kitchen, or be solicitous in inquiring what is for dinner. "Wo to thee, O land, whose princes eat in the morning. Blessed is the land, whose princes eat in their time." Eccl. x. 16, 17. We shall leave our appetite quite ungoverned and without restraint, unless we accustom it to fast without murmuring at its regular meals.

7. Another object of temperance is, not to seek dainties. The ancients, in the ages of simplicity and nature, never in their banquets prepared more than one thing, and that simple and plain. If they would do honour to a king or noble guest, the distinction was to set before him not a variety of dishes to tempt his appetite, but a whole joint or a double portion. Thus Abraham, himself a great prince, treated angels and princes with a single dish, such as a fresh cake baked on the embers, or a boiled kid. When Saul was treated in his inauguration banquet, Samuel ordered a shoulder of meat to be set before him. 1 Kings ix. 34.

It was luxury that invented a variety of viands on the same table. This was the first remarkable step, amongst the Persians, Grecians, and

Romans, of their degeneracy from the frugality and temperance, and soon after, by a necessary fatal consequence, from all the virtues of their ancestors.

It is a second transgression of this virtue, to prepare costly meats, or to be nice and curious in the search of extraordinary rarities. When we consider the extravagant prices of the acipenser (sturgeon) and the thynnus (tunny-fish) among the Romans, we perceive the highest symptoms of luxury, vanity, and sensuality portending the downfal of their greatness and virtue, which followed upon the heels of these vices. Custom has allowed and even made necessary a certain variety of dishes, and a distinction in the choice, in proportion to persons, rank in the world; and that is decent in one, which would be extravagance in another. But some meats are too expensive, or cost too much search, to be ever allowed on any table without a crime. Food ought not to employ so many hands, so much time, or so much money. Christian temperance however allows a moderate decency in tables according to the distinction established by the order of the world; but in this it leans to be as sparing as may be with decency, and to shun all danger of the common temptations of luxury and sensuality, knowing that the superfluities of the rich are necessary to the poor, and due to them, though they be ever so great. A much stricter abstemiousness is necessary in those, who have renounced the world.

Charity advises that we should remit a little of our ordinary severity on certain occasions, to entertain strangers, when it is suitable that we should do so. Likewise, perhaps, that we sometimes dine at great tables or feasts, though modesty and many other virtues require our being reserved and as backward as may be in frequenting them. Our Lord himself was pleased to sanctify a marriage feast with his presence, and assisted sometimes at the tables of the rich. Nor does the vice of intemperance consist so much in what we eat, as in the affection and sensuality, with which we eat. And it is the best rule to eat what is set before us, or what seems most wholesome and best for us, or at least any great attention to the taste.

8. Nicety in the dressing and cookery of the meat is still a greater fault of intemperance. Nature has dealt with man in a very different manner from other animals. They find their food ready provided for them, and are taught by instinct alone where to seek it. Man is to produce his by labour and toil, and afterwards to prepare it by dressing. God has given him for his nourishment not only the produce of the land, but at at least since the deluge, man's life and strength being impaired, and herbs and legumes having probably lost much of their salutary and strengthening qualities, also the fishes of the sea, the birds of the air, and the flesh of beasts wild and tame. Yet not content with this bounty, he employs all his reason to create to himself by art a new and forced unnatural diet. Nature points out nothing but simple and plain cookery, with no other seasoning than what is likewise simple, as of salt, oil, or the like. This was the practice not only of the golden age of innocence, but of those which first succeeded it, the frugality of which still maintained something of the simplicity of nature, but of which the very memory now seems almost blotted out of men's minds. St. Clemens of Alexandria deplores, that cooks were become in greater esteem than gardeners and country-labourers, l. 2, c. 1.

All our rich sauces, jumbling different meats into one dish, high-seasoned or very rich foods, with the whole class of viands, which are only the produce of a refined study, and of the elaborate infamous art of luxury

(for such is modern cookery) are very opposite to nature, health, and virtue. To health; for they pall the stomach, hinder instead of promoting easy digestion, and wear and corrode the very organs of the taste, which sense they stupify and destroy, making it incapable of finding any relish in the plain food, for which nature framed it. The mischiefs they create within the bowels are still far greater, where they corrode the tender vessels, obstruct the passages, corrupt the fluids, inflame the whole body, and fill it in many parts together with the seeds of innumerable diseases. Temperance prescribes the plainest meats and most simple sauces, that custom will allow at tables, and chooses for itself such nourishment; not eating to provoke an appetite, to create to itself an irregular one, or to gratify an inordinate one; but to support necessary health and strength. One of the best sayings recorded of the Cynic philosopher is that; "Let my enemies live on dainties."[a]

9. Excess in eating is always a dangerous temptation; and we easily slide into this fault. The pleasure, which accompanies this action, easily deceives us, and draws us beyond the strict bounds of what is necessary, and often without our perceiving it, whilst we indulge ourselves under a pretext of necessity, when this is but self-illusion. We find we have transgressed in this article, if after meals we feel a heaviness or dullness in our spirits, or a load or indigestion in our stomachs through the quantity which we have taken, or that hence our sleep is not sound; or that we are, after our meals less fit for our duties either in mind or body.

All excess in eating both stupifies the soul and hurts the health of the body. It overcharges the stomach, impedes its action in digestion, and produces filthy gross humours, which hinder a free circulation, and the full play of the lungs, obstruct the smaller vessels, and carry disorders into every organ. What is excess every one is best judge for his own constitution. The quantity under this transgression, which is necessary for the body, does not consist in an invisible point; those, who are for carrying it so far, will be sure to exceed. If we desire not to offend and to preserve the virtue of temperance, we must be sure to keep ourselves always under and at a distance from the extremity, subtracting from our bodies in proportion as our less fatigue and exercise may require less refection; a rule very requisite for our health as well as for virtue.

As there is a particular danger of gluttony at extraordinary times of merriment, whoever assists on such occasions must be well armed with good resolutions to touch only few things, and to let nothing engage him to exceed his limited bounds. He will find a present advantage in the testimony of innocence, in the victory over himself, and in the health, good temper, and ease both of mind and body, which will follow. "In much meat is sickness." Eccl. xxxvii. 33. "The sleep of health in the temperate man." Eccl. xxxi. 24.

It is a precept often repeated in St. Jerom's epistles, and in the rules of the ancient Ascetics, always to leave off a meal whilst a person has still an appetite. At least he, that proposes to himself to eat as much as he can, certainly commits excess.

10. The fifth and last danger, which temperance is to guard against, is greediness. To eat solely for pleasure is always a sin, as St. Gregory (Mor. l. 30, c. 13 & 14) and St. Austin (l. 4, contr. Jul. c. 14, l. de mor. Eccl. c. 21) prove, as it is an act of sensuality and against the end of

[a] Diog. Laert. l. 6, in Diogene.

nature. Whence Pope Innocent XI. condemned this proposition, (n. 8) "To eat and drink to satiety for pleasure alone is no sin." To eat with pleasure is no ways to be censured, on condition it be referred to the ends, which nature and God prescribes, viz., his will and honour, and our life and strength.

In eating it is the affection, which makes the sin, not what is eaten. As St. Augustin writes, (l. 3, de doct. chr., c. 12.) "The wise man may use the most precious meat without any vice of gluttony or concupiscence; and the fool may be inflamed with the basest gluttony for the vilest." And St. Gregory says, (Mor. l. 30, c. 18, l. 27.) "Not the meat, but the appetite is in the fault. We often take more dainty food without sin, yet fall into gluttony in the meanest. Esau's greediness was for a mess of pottage." The devil tempted Christ only with bread.

Against this most ordinary fault of intemperance we must carefully guard our interior, not eating as gluttons do, greedy to relish the savour of the meat, or eager in seeking it; but rather treating it with indifference. 2ndly, We must always be content in mind with our food, receiving it with thanksgiving to God its author, never murmuring at it, never desiring other more palatable meats, as the Israelites did in the desart, repining at their manna, and longing for the flesh-pots of Egypt, Exod. xvi. Our nourishment is from the bountiful hand of God no less than theirs was. The best method to preserve ourselves from this vice, and to practice holy temperance, is, for us to receive more palatable meats only when offered, and with an inward reluctance, and a desire rather of mortifying ourselves, in refusing them and choosing the more unsavoury meats if left to ourselves. We must also strictly observe the rules of exterior modesty, decency, and temperance in our meals, and observe those precepts, which it was not beneath the divine oracle to dictate to us: "Be not greedy in any banquet, and do not fall on all the meats." Eccl. xxxvii. 32. "Use as a rational man those things, which are set before thee; lest, whilst thou eatest much, thou shouldst be hated." Eccl. xxxi. 19. "Leave off first for discipline sake," v. 20. "And if thou sittest in the midst of many, extend not thy hand first, nor ask to drink first." Ib. 21. We must not eat in a voracious manner, or too fast. Meat without a slow and perfect trituration can never be digested in the stomach. We ought never to talk of our hunger, or of the taste of meats, &c.

A fear of these dangers made several saints study to make their meals a mortification and a cross. Let us at least approach our meal only as physic, for the necessity of our bodies. "Thou hast taught me this, O Lord, that I approach to take my food, as to a physic. For as medicines are not to be taken to fill, but for the health of the body, so food is not to be taken to satiety, but only for the necessity and support of the same body," says St. Augustin, Conf. l. 10, c. 31. If we feel a vehement desire for any particular meat or dish, we should make it a rule to abstain from it.

11. As our meals are a daily and necessary, yet dangerous action, we we must be very attentive and careful to consecrate them to God, by making them occasions of a continual victory over ourselves and the ensnaring passion of gluttony. For this end we must never approach them without raising our hearts to God by a short oblation of ourselves, and prayer, by which, not in bare words, but in the earnest affections of our soul, we beg his divine majesty to bestow his benediction on our food, that it may conduce to our corporal nourishment for his service, remembering

gratefully that it is his bountiful gift; and likewise to impart his holy blessing to us, that we may take this food in a manner, which may be for his divine honour, and for the sanctification of our own souls. This intention should be sometimes privately renewed in our hearts during the meal.

Our food is the special gift of God, as the royal prophet says, Ps. ciii. 27. "All expect from thee, that thou give them meat." And Ps. cxliv. 15, 16. "The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord; and thou givest their food in convenient time. Thou openest thy hand, and fillest every living creature with thy benediction." Therefore, we begin and close every meal with giving hearty thanks to God for these his gifts. "The merciful and compassionate Lord has renewed a remembrance of his wondrous works; he has given meat to those, that fear him." Ps. cx. 4.

Also as temperance or victory over ourselves is a particular gift of God's grace, we must humbly ask it of him. The Holy Ghost teaches us to pray for it by the mouth of the inspired son of Sirach: "Take from me the concupiscence of the belly." Eccl. xxiii. 6. St. Augustin testifies how earnestly he made it his petition, speaking of the temptations of gluttony in eating: "I daily labour to resist these temptations, and I invoke, O my Lord, thy right hand to my salvation: and I refer my struggles to thee." Hence the tradition of all ages has established a sacred benediction before and after meals, which it is easy to trace up to the earliest times; and all the ritual books of Christians and Jews contain formulas of doing it. Can we sufficiently lament the irreligion of this age, when we see this solemn and sacred custom totally forgotten at several great tables; or performed in a negligent unthinking manner by many, who exteriorly observe it! Such persons go to meals worse than asses and mules, who have no understanding or knowledge of God.

12. In the choice of what we eat, the best rule is to receive indifferently what is set before us, and to let others to whom it belongs help us, as they judge best. If it be our province to carve in company, even good manners oblige us to help others with the choicest pieces. If we must choose for ourselves, let us do it without any greediness for any thing. If we feel such a temptation, it will be very advantageous to refuse it to ourselves; at least we are bound to correct that appetite and intention. It is a counsel advisable for perfection to choose what we least like; it is necessary even for good manners that we show no niceness in our choice, nor complain of the meals or dressing, or talk fondly of them. "If the bread next you be too hard, too soft, or other than what you like, eat it rather, because it is less agreeable to sensuality," is the advice of St. Vincent Ferrerius, (de vit. spir. c. 3) i. e. if this be done without affectation, or being observed by others; which in the first place must be avoided in all self-denials. At least, if we desire to keep our appetites under command, we should accustom them to obedience by frequent little cheerful refusals in our meals, chiefly as to those things, which are less wholesome for us. We must also, for the sake of virtue and God, forego whatever may be favourable to sensuality. This will be a victory over our domestic enemy, and an acceptable sacrifice for our good angel to present before Almighty God. Let every one take here such resolutions as best suit his circumstances and necessities. But to eat without any denials would be to abandon ourselves to an ungovernable appetite, and to make it soon become our master. Particularly we must be watchful against all excesses. "Sleep is sweet to him that works, whether he eat little or much; but the fulness of the rich man does not suffer him to sleep." Eccl. v. 11.

13. To draw our attention from the pleasure of the taste, it is a good method to be employed at meals in listening a little to some pious reading, or at least in some improving innocent entertainment or conversation; or sometimes, with short private ejaculations in the heart, to reflect in what manner Christ our Lord was pleased to drink gall and vinegar in his bitter passion, and to suffer hunger and thirst in his laborious journies to teach men his saving truths; or how many poor are almost perishing with hunger; or how great our misery is in this our banishment to be subject to these necessities of the body, whilst the blessed in heaven feed in spirit on the contemplation of the immortal deity, the true bread of life; or how penitential or mortified the lives of the saints were on earth; or on the precept of our holy religion: "That we make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences." Rom. xiii. 14.

14. Temperance in drinking is still of greater importance than in eating. First, because the pleasure and allurements to it are often greater. Secondly, because excesses in it are far more enormous, and their consequences also more fatal. Thirdly, because it is still more destructive of wisdom and virtue, and of every good disposition in the heart. Whence it was commanded in the old law, that all, who consecrated themselves to God, should always refrain from wine, and all liquors that could inebriate. Num. vi. 2.

Under thirty years of age, in the heat of youth, all persons ought to abstain from wine and all strong liquors, which are not useful for them, even in a small or moderate quantity, to give force and action to their spirits and organs, of themselves inclined to be too vehement. Whence young persons usually have not an inclination to them from nature; although they may create it in themselves, which is a frequent unhappy case.

Again, this abstinence is indispensable in that age for the preservation of chastity. St. Jerom and several other ancients are extremely severe and inexorable in this article; and that in countries where there was no other drink but wine and water. If this cannot be entirely observed, let it be attended to as much as possible.

Wine drunk with moderation gives vigour and activity to the spirits, and motion to the vessels, which assists nature and is conducive to strength and health in lax habits of body; and good wine is the best cordial known in nature. "Wine was created from the beginning for cheerfulness, and not for drunkenness. Wine drunk temperately is joy of the soul and heart. Sober drink is health to the mind and body." Eccl. xxxi. 35, 36, 37. It agrees not with bodies already too vigorous, or in the heat of youth, or under any feverish disposition. But to assist the action of the fibres when too languid, and invigorate nature when too feeble for her necessary functions, and where there is no danger of obstructions or a fever, one or two small glasses are serviceable towards the end of dinner, especially to persons advanced in years. But as wine is no diluter, and does not help digestion otherwise than indirectly by increasing the action of the stomach and vessels, if persons advanced in years make it their usual drink at meals, even health requires its being mixed with water. Taking much wine, though to no excess, is always more prejudicial than serviceable. Physicians justly applaud that maxim of the great Sir William Temple: "I take one glass for myself, a second for a friend; but if I took a third, it would be for my enemy."

Water is undoubtedly allowed by all physicians to be the best digester in nature, as it is both the best diluter and the best dissolvent, consisting of the most penetrating particles, and being the aptest of all vehicles. If it has once passed the fire, the insects it swarms with in certain seasons will be killed, and its chilliness removed. The smallest drink is usually the best for digestion, unless a too relaxed habit, as in case of a dropsy, forbid it. Hence the ancients, even the heroes before battle, were chiefly water-drinkers, as Pope observes upon Homer; and when the Grecians used wine, they usually mixed three parts of water to one of wine, as Cooke shows from Menander and Hesiod in his notes upon the latter. Op. & Dier. B. 2, v. 284, p. 204. Yet the whim of those, who barely for health would reduce all men to drink only simple water, is as extravagant as that other of the same gentlemen, viz., that the most wholesome way of living is to eat nothing but herbs; in which the fibres are so closely knit as to be hardly soluble, unless by vigorous stomachs. The best rule for health, in this respect, is, to allow a certain latitude and variety in plain food, avoiding what is unwholesome either in itself, or relatively to each particular constitution and habit of body, but without any strict slavery to one particular kind of diet? a fault to be shunned, were it only for this inconvenience, that a body long accustomed to so strict a regimen could never once vary from it without great danger; as those, who (e. g.) for an asthma, should have accustomed themselves long to drink every thing warm, could never touch any cold drink.

All persons ought to set themselves certain rules as to the most moderate use of strong drink according to their constitution and circumstances; never to seek curious or rare wines; never to talk nicely or much of their goodness or flavour; never to drink more than what nature requires, and on all occasions to keep within the strict rules of sobriety and decency. It is a good advice and a proper abstinence never to drink any thing out of meals, unless obliged by some extraordinary occasion.

O my soul, embrace holy temperance, the mother of so many and so great advantages, and the extirpatress of passion; a virtue most essential to every soldier of Christ. The more perfectly gluttony and intemperance are subdued, so much the weaker will all thy other enemies be made, and their assaults more easy to be overcome. But, if I suffer myself to be vanquished at home, how can I hope to overcome foreign enemies?

An experienced physician thus addresses temperance with regard to bodily health: "O temperance! thou source of human bliss, far exceeding our praise and admiration! the glory and security of the first age of the world, which, for thy sake alone, was accounted golden! the principal and last promoter of real comfort and composure, of serenity of mind and body. Thou crownest us with length of years, health, and pleasure, with a countenance cheerful and amiable, with limbs brisk and active. Thy gifts extort applause from thy enemies, and the most intemperate," &c.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON ABSTINENCE AND FASTING.

ABSTINENCE is a virtue retrenching and moderating the quality of our food through a spirit of temperance and penance. Thus entirely to abstain from wine may be a temperance agreeable to God, and a means to make our souls better disposed to receive wisdom and virtue. "I thought in my heart," said Solomon, "to withdraw my flesh from wine, that I might

transfer my mind to wisdom and shun folly." Eccl. ii. 3. The Holy Ghost commends the obedience of the Rechabites to the precept of their father Jonadab, never to touch wine. Jer. xxxv. 18. Daniel with his companions abstained from wine. Dan. i. and x. So did John Baptist, by the instinct of the Holy Ghost; Luke i. 15. Timothy observed this rule, so as to oblige St. Paul to order him a little moderation on account of his sicknesses and weak stomach. Eusebius relates the same austerity of St. James of Jerusalem, and of the first christians of Alexandria under St. Mark. St. Augustin commends it as the practice of many bishops, priests, and monks in his time; l. de mor. eccl. c. 30. St. Jerom, in his letter to Eustochium, says: "If I have any credit to give advice, if my experience can be believed, I in the first place admonish and conjure that the spouse of Christ fly all wine as a poison." Indeed the heathen Romans allowed no young persons under thirty to drink wine, as it is an incentive of the passions.[a] And St. Clemens of Alexandria, (Pædag. l. 2, c. 2,) advises to drink water, and fly wine as the threats of a fire, adding: "Let young persons of either sex be particularly abstemious; for it is no way proper to allow wine to that boiling age, which is to add fire to fire, from which raging desires and burning passions are kindled." What has been now observed of the use of wine, is equally applicable to the abstaining, at least on certain times, from some meats or sorts of food of too nutritious a nature.

But as to abstinence and fasting, several Protestant writers agree with us in their writings, though not in practice. Dr. Weston, late famous bishop of Exeter, in his sermon on Mortification, t. 2, having observed, that we are to practise it in our meals two ways, by retrenching certain foods in them or by abstinence, and by retrenching the meals themselves or by fasting, adds, that every one ought to have times set to comply with this duty, and laments it is so little practised on the days appointed by their church for it; which rubric at least is an admonition that every one is bound to have some times allotted to it. See "The Whole Duty of Man," &c.

DISCOURSE LIV.

ON VIRGINITY.

1. MAN in the state of innocence was exempt from the sting of concupiscence, and from the domestic war of his own will or members. But no sooner had our first parents forfeited the grace of God by their rebellion and disobedience, than they experienced this revolt within themselves; which they confessed by blushing to see themselves naked. Christ, by redeeming us, obtained for us the graces, by which we are made victorious over our spiritual enemies, if we ourselves art not wanting in corresponding to them. By his grace therefore, concupiscence is always subject to our reason, and it is always in our power to refuse our consent to its suggestions. "However the appetite shall be subject to thee, and thou shalt command it."[b] Gen. iv. Our victory over this enemy is a virtue, which

[a] Ælian, Hist. var. l, 10 c. 9. Alex. ab. Alex. Gen. Dier, &c.
[b] Verumtamen sub te erit appetitus ejus, & tu dominaberis illius.

renders us worthy of God, and pure and holy in his eyes. Its chiefest and most heroic part is holy chastity, or the virtue which governs or restrains lust. That passion is the foulest, and at the same time the most furious of all the depraved inclinations, which the corruption of sin hath planted in our nature; and a steady virtue hath much to do to keep itself untainted by it, and from being overthrown by its own weakness on that side. It is engrafted in our very frame and constitution; it is fomented and put in a flame upon every small occasion, and by every spark of a temptation; and it breaks out many times with a violence, which borders upon fury, and requires the utmost watchfulness and vigour to restrain it. But the baser and more furious this enemy is, the more excellent is the virtue of chastity, by which it is overcome. "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory! for the memory thereof is immortal; because it is known both with God, and with men." Wisd. iv. 1. "It triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts." Ib. v. 2. "No price is worthy of a continent soul." Eccles xxvi. 20. If any ask why God hath subjected mankind to so perpetual, so importunate, so vexatious a warfare, he will remember that it is left for the trial of our fidelity since our first disobedience, and for an occasion of victories and crowns.

2. Continency is divided into three kinds: that of the married state, that of widowhood, and that of virginity. Matrimony is a holy and honourable state, and obliges all persons engaged in it to converse together in sanctity and purity. "That every one of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God." 1 Thess. iv. 4, 5. Any impurity not referred to the lawful end of that state is a more grievous crime before God than if it were committed by those, who are single; and intemperance in that, which is lawful, is always a venial sin. Even the use of marriage is not exempt from a venial sin, if pleasure be the only end. It is an error condemned by Innocent XI. prop. 9: "The marriage right exercised with a view to pleasure only is exempt from all venial fault and defect."[a] The lawful ends are either for the sake of posterity, or to comply with the request of the other party; which obstinately to refuse, especially out of anger, would be a mortal sin against justice. 1 Cor. vii. Or lastly, to seek by it a remedy against the temptation of concupiscence. The ancient canons and the fathers frequently repeat the old ecclesiastical precept, which commanded married persons to observe continency on all festivals, fast-days, in lent, and on the day before they received any sacrament: though Azor, Bonacina, Pontas, &c., say that precept has no longer the force of a law, yet all exhort married persons to observe it from the spirit of the church, and a kind of natural decency. St. Charles Borroméo orders them to be put in mind of it; and St. Paul advises it for times of devotion. 1 Cor. vii. 5. Hence this virtue has generally its difficulty also in the married state. "This difficulty is so great, that many find it easier never to know a woman, than to observe moderation, and to act only for the sake of children."[b] St. Aug. l. de bono conjugii, c. 13. Sir Thomas More testifies, that he found the conflict against this passion

[a] Opus conjugii ob solam voluptatem exercitum omni penitus caret culpa & defectu veniali.

[b] Hoc tam magnum est ut multi homines facilius se tota vita ab omni concubitu abstineant, quam modum teneant non coeundi nisi prolis causa, si matrimonio copulentur.

more difficult in marriage than he had in his youth; which Bourdaloue also shows often to happen. The continency of the widowhood requires nearly the same laws with that of virginity; and its conflict is often more difficult.

3. Virginity is a perpetual integrity of mind and body exempt from all carnal defilement. Christ enobled this virtue as an illustrious fruit of his incarnation, and recommmended it to those, who have the courage for, and a call to so excellent a state. Mat. xix. 11. "There are eunuchs, who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." Upon which passage Dr. Wells owns, that Christ declares voluntary chastity for the kingdom of heaven's sake to be an excellence, and an excellent state of life; (Paraphr. on St. Matthew, p. 185,) though he pretends that all have not this gift in their power. But if any have it not, it is because they do not seek it, nor use the means to obtain it. "It is given to those, who wish, who ask, who endeavour to obtain it. For it shall be given to all who ask it, and it shall be found by him who seeks it." St. Jerom in Mat. l. 3, t. 4, part 1, p. 87, ed Ben. The same does St. Chrysostom teach at large in expounding this same text. Tertullian writes, (l. de monog. near the end,) "If you cannot, it is because you will not. For he shows you can if you will, because he leaves both to your choice." St. Gregory Naz. or. 31. "It is given to those who will, and who assent." St. Austin says to God: "You would give continence, if I asked it." See Origin in Mat. 19. St. Ambrose, l. 3, de virgin. & l. de viduis. Auctor oper. imperf. in Mat. 19.

4. "I would that all men were even as myself; but every man hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that. But I say to the unmarried, and to the widow, it is good for them so to continue even as I." 1 Cor. vii. 7, 8. "Concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give counsel, as having mercy of the Lord to be faithful." v. 25. "Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife." v. 27. "But if thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned; nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh. But I spare you." v. 28. "I would have you be without solicitude. He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things, that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he, that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of this world, and is divided." v. 32, 33. "He, that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well; and he, that giveth her not, doth better." v. 38. He indeed saith, it is better to marry, than to burn with lust, viz. if a person will not use other remedies against lust. And he calls virginity a gift of God; but so he does of the continency of the married, and of widows. And the Wise man: "I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, unless God gave it; and this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was. Wisd. viii. 21.

5. "I beheld, and lo a Lamb stood on mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand having his name, and the name of his Father written on their foreheads." Rev. xiv. 1. "And they sang as it were a new canticle, before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the ancients; and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred and forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God, and to the Lamb. They are without

spot before the throne of God." v. 3, 4, 5. They are called the first fruits, to express in the Hebrew phrase, that they are the inheritance properly consecrated to God. Upon this possage St. Austin exclaims: "Whither do you think this Lamb is going, since no one dares, no one is able to follow him, besides the virgins? Into what pastures, what meadows is he going? He will find joys and pleasures such as this vain deceitful world does not afford, such as are not found even in heaven but by virgins. The blessed shall all enjoy Christ, but still in a manner not like the virgins." St. Augustin l. de sancta virginit. c. 27, t. 6, p. 354, ed. Ben. "Take care while it is in your power not to lose the gift of virginity, which once lost can never be recovered. The rest of the world shall see you following the Lamb; they shall see you without envy, and with joy, because what they possess not themselves they will enjoy in you. They will not be able to sing your new cantical, but they will hear and be delighted with it. Yours will be the happier lot." ib. c. 29, p. 355.

6. The works of all the primitive fathers are filled with the highest encomiums of this virtue, and many of them have written whole books on this subject. St. Methodus, a most learned and holy bishop of Tyre, and martyr A. D. 290, whose eloquence, extraordinary erudition, and virtue are much extolled by St. Jerom, St. Epiphanius, Photius, &c. wrote his banquet of virgins, or dialogue between ten holy virgins, in praise of this virtue, in which he writes: "Virginity is a great and glorious virtue; the fairest flower of the church of God. Chastity is granted to few men, and is surrounded with dangers proportioned to its high extraction." Or. 1, p. 6.

St. Cyprian says of virgins: "They are the finest flowers of the christian church, the fairest ornaments of a spiritual life, the surest and most lasting proof of honour and virtue, the nearest resemblance of the sanctity of God and the family of Christ. In them the church boasts her glorious fecundity; and every increase in the number of virgins brings an addition to her joy and satisfaction." l. de habitu virginum. See St. Austin, l. de virginitate, t. 6, ed. Ben. St. Chrysostom, l. de virginitate, t. 1, p. 275, ed. Ben. St. Athanasius, ep. canonica ad Amm. ed. Bevereg. t. 1, p. 37, & l. de virginit. St. Basil, l. de vera virginitate.

7. The fathers extol this holy virtue and state. First, because it is the peculiar institution and fruit of the incarnation of the Son of God. "The author of purity delights in all things clean; he chose a pure virgin for his mother; he loved his virgin disciple more than the rest; he is seen by the clean of heart, and he is possessed by the clean in body." St. Thomas de villa nova, Serm. 3, de sacr. altar. And he who chose a virgin mother, a virgin precursor, and a virgin for his beloved disciple, inspired his church to admit only virgins to serve his altar, and to consecrate his spotless virgin body. Even in the old law continency was commanded before holy duties. Exod. xix. 15. 1 Sam. xxi. 4. Zach. vii. 4. 1 Cor. vii. 5. Pope Innocent gives this reason for the law of chastity in priests: "because they are occupied in the daily ministry; for no day passes, in which they do not offer the divine sacrifice, or baptize." ep. 2, ad. Victr. Rotom. "As soon as the Son of God came into the world, he insituted a new family, that being adored by angels in heaven he might have other angels on earth." St. Jerom, ep. 18, ad Eustoch. p. 38, t. 4, ed. Ben.

Secondly, Because it makes men spiritual, and angels upon earth. "The angels do not marry. No more does the virgin. They are always

employed in the presence and in the service of God. So is the virgin. Hence St. Paul exempts her from all care. Virginity makes mortals resemble and equal the angels themselves." St. Chrys. l. de virgin. t. 1, p. 276, ed. Ben. On this account the saints in heaven are said to resemble the angels. "At the resurrection they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but shall be like unto the angels." Matt. xxii. Purity produces this likeness on earth, and in this exceeds the angels, that it maintains its advantage against the most violent enemy, and by triumphing over the allurements of pleasure. "Upon serious consideration virginity will be found not only to equal but to surpass the angels. Virgins clothed in flesh fight valiantly, and conquer a nature, which the angels have not. Virginity is a long childhood, and a triumph over voluptuousness." Auctor vetus, l. de pudicitia. inter op. S. Cypriani, p. 420, ed. Pam.

Thirdly, It makes men bear a nearer resemblance with God, who is the most pure spirit. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." Mat. v.

Purity cleanses and opens the eyes of the soul to see and know God more perfectly in this life, and draws down his eyes upon her. "How can he resemble God who yields to charms of pleasure, or how can he be said to be endowed with knowledge? The clean heart and the mind free from vice is in some measure a proper receptacle of the divine power as bearing the resemblance of God; and whoever has this hope in the Lord renders himself clean and chaste as he is chaste. For it is impossible, that a man of any knowledge should pamper his flesh." Clemens Alex. Strom. l. 3, c. 4. "Whoever has this hope, sanctifies himself as he is holy." 1 John iii. St. Austin and Didymus read it: "makes himself chaste as he is chaste."[a] God, in the book of Canticles, treats virgins as his spouses; in the Apocalypse they appear as the constant companions of the Lamb, and his delight.

The fathers likewise insist on the particular advantage of this virtue to fit the soul for heavenly things. Chastity purifies the soul and disengages the mind and heart from the distracting thoughts and affections of this world. "The virgin thinks of the things, which are of God." 1 Cor. vii.

An ancient author of a book de pudicitia, under the name of St. Cyprian, sums up the advantages of purity, when he styles it: "an honour to the body, an improvement of manners, the sanctifier of the sex, the bond of modesty, the source of chastity, the peace of the family the crown of friendship. It recommends us to God, connects us with Christ, expels from our bodies all the conflicts of lust and evil desires, and blesses them with a lasting peace. Happy in itself, it renders those happy, in whom it deigns to abide." St. Austin observes, that chastity not only renders a man amiable to God, the angels, and virtuous men; but even to the most profligate. For even the most luxurious admire and esteem the chaste. Serm. 343, p, 827, t. 5. "Chastity has four remarkable qualities. It keeps the body clean, whereas lust defiles it. So that, if chastity had no other advantage but cleanness, it would be well worth our while to practise it. But it gives liberty and a clear conscience, and makes us agreeable to men and angels." S. Bonav. tr. de profectu religiosorum. c. 53.

Blessed Giles, a lay-brother, and one of the first companions and assist-

[a] Castificat seipsum, sicut ipse castus est.

ants of St. Francis of Assisium used to say: "It is impossible for any one to come to the grace of God, who delights himself in the filth of the flesh. Turn yourself which way you will, up or down, on this side or on that, there is no way of escaping out of the reach of this enemy, which lurks continually seeking to betray the soul. He, who overcomes this, overcomes all his enemies, and attains all good. Among all virtues this of chastity is amiable to me." One said to him: "Is not charity the greater virtue?" He replied: "And what is more chaste than charity?" He frequently repeated: "O chastity, how sweet, how beautiful art thou! Such is thy dignity and excellence that fools cannot comprehend it." St. Antonin. hist. part. 3, tit. 24 c 12.

8. The more excellent this virtue is, and the higher its glory and reward, so much the more heroic and the more difficult is its victory. St. Austin says, that the devil, who formerly persecuted the martyrs by fire and sword, continues his assaults against the servants of God by the temptations of lust, which vice he calls the most grievous persecution of the church, which calls for the continual sighs and tears of all, who have the bowels of charity; for not only the heathens, but even some, who carry the sign of the cross on their foreheads, carry also on the same the ensigns of their lusts, and on the festivals of the martyrs rather come to insult them, than to rejoice in them. Enar. in Ps. 69, p. 711, 712, t 4.

Cassian says of this vice: "It is a sharp and long engagement, a cruel war in which few succeed." Whence he presses all persons most diligently to arm themselves against it by prayer, reading of the holy scriptures, assiduous labour, and above all by laying a solid foundation of humility, without which a triumph over any sin cannot be gained. Instit. l. 6, c. 1.

"Of all the attacks sustained in this life the most dangerous are the assault against chastity. We are obliged always to be on our guard, and we seldom conquer. The enemy of chastity, even after a defeat, is always formidable. Let no man then suffer himself to be lulled into a fatal security, nor foolishly trust to his own strength." St. Cæsarius, Serm. ol. 250, inter. sermones S. Aug. de tempore nunc 293. App. ed. Ben. t. 5.

9. "The virgin must be endowed with a firmness and constancy of mind: for she must walk on red hot coals without being burnt; she must meet naked swords without being wounded; for lust is trying and not less dangerous than fire and sword. If we are not disposed to submit to pain and uneasiness, we are lost. The mind must be steeled, the eye must be watchful, the body ready to suffer: the walls must be strong, the guards active and courageous." St. Chrysostom l. de virgin. p. 217, t. 1, ed. Ben.

St. Gregory the great observes, that the passion of lust throws itself in the way to stop the advancement of every soul, that desires to serve God. This he calls the most violent enemy of our souls, which is not overcome without great courage and difficulty. It is therefore necessary that we put on all our armour against it, especially most fervent prayer. All other virtues are also necessary; because he, who fights against impurity, can never conquer this enemy, unless he be strengthened by the whole crown of virtues. L. 4, in. 1 Reg. t. 3, ed. Ben. p. 314.

St. Jerom complains that in his wilderness amidst continual sighs and tears, watchings, prayer, and fasts, in his emaciated body he felt sometimes the cruel buffets of this domestic enemy, and adds: "These are the

favourite arms of the devil against youth. Neither avarice, nor pride, nor ambition are so much to be feared. Other vices are easily overcome; but this enemy we carry about us. He attends us, let us go where we will. If then I may advise, if experience has afforded me any knowledge, I beg and entreat that a virgin will never taste wine. Let us not pour oil on the fire. Why add fuel to a flame, that consumes us?" ep. 22, ad Eustochium.

10. St. John Climacus cries out: "I am at a loss to know how to treat my flesh. It is not like other enemies; it is at once a friend and a foe. No chain will hold it, and my partiality prevents its punishment. How can I punish what nature commands me to love? How can I avoid what is intimately united to me? How can I answer its delusive eloquence? It is at once a friend and an enemy, a traitor and an ally. If I yield, I am ruined: if I resist, it is weakened: it will not submit to correction. I cannot inflict it without danger to myself; I cannot indulge it without forfeiting every hope of virtue. Tell me then, my spouse, tell me, nature, how I can escape being wounded, since Christ has commanded me to wage perpetual war with thee? How can I subdue thy tyrannic sway? I say nothing but what thou knowest to be true. Self-love was my parent and is my nurse. If thou art sensible of our mutual weakness, I must wear thy chains;" &c. St. Joan. Clim. gradu. 15.

"We carry about with us our enemy in the flesh, which was conceived and nursed in sin, originally corrupt and habitually wicked. This is the instrument employed against us by the wicked serpent, who aims incessantly at the ruin of our souls. He binds us in our own fetters, and smites us with our own weapons, making the flesh, which was created for our assistance, the cause of our utter ruin and perdition. Hard and dangerous is the contest with a domestic enemy, especially as he is a citizen and we aliens, he is at home and we exiles." St. Bernard, Serm. 5, in Quadrag.

"Hard is thy struggle, O brother, and deserving of thy most serious attention. All the angels in heaven and the Lord of angels are the spectators of thy combat with the devil. If thou comest off victorious, the angels will celebrate thy triumph, and will sing the praises of him, who gave thee courage and power to crush the infernal foe." St. Ephrem de pœnit.

11. St. Gregory Nazianzen observes, (Carm. ad virgines, p. 810,) that, though virginity be more excellent than marriage, yet holy marriage far surpasses a virginity, which is doubtful, or not faithfully kept. St. Methodius, St. Fulgentius, &c. compare virginity to gold, and marriage to silver; or the former to the sun, and the latter to the stars. St. Austin says the fruit of virginity is an hundred fold, that of marriage sixty fold. But St. Ambrose admonishes us, (l. de viduis, t. 5, p. 635,) that the continency both of the virgins, of the widows and of the married, will each recive its crown, if it be preserved faithfully without spot or stain. Marriage is the general state of mankind, and may be sanctified by heroic charity, and rendered a state of christian perfection.

DISCOURSE LV.

ON MATRIMONY.

1. MATRIMONY is a special contract of an individual society of life between a man and a woman, between whom there is no impediment, and who give and accept mutually the dominion of each other's bodies. It is in itself exceedingly honourable and holy, instituted by God himself, appointed by him in the state of innocence and perfection in paradise; and, since man's fall, made a remedy of concupiscence, as well as the source, whence mankind is propagated and preserved. It is founded in nature, and was of precept in the first creation of man, as St. Cyprian, and St. Augustin (l. de bono Viduit.) observe, as it was God's will that the world should be peopled and maintained; but not afterwards, as to individuals, as appears in Josue, Elias, Jeremiah, Daniel, &c. And in the new law a state of virginity is more excellent and more perfect. "There are eunuchs, who have made themselves so for the kingdom of heaven." Mat. xix. 12. See also 1 Cor. vii. &c. Though it is sometimes of precept to particular persons, out of justice to the public, as when the public peace and support of the commonwealth depends upon an heir, yet the words, "Increase and multiply," (Gen. i.,) imply not a precept, but a benediction. Matrimony was, in its primitive institution, an office of nature; but, even in the state of innocence, a great mystery and figure, representing the future spiritual union of Christ and his church.

2. Our blessed Redeemer honoured this contract many ways, exalted it to the dignity of a sacrament of the new law, and made its union more strict and sacred. He had from the beginning conferred upon it a singular privilege, as it is a great mystery, ordained to represent his indissoluble union with his church, which it does more perfectly in the new law, in which the band is more sacred and more indissoluble. He honoured it with his presence, and by the first miracle which he wrought, at a marriage in Cana But all its privileges are eclipsed by the dignity of a great sacrament, to which he raised it. Eph. v. 32.

We then respect this holy state, so highly honoured by Christ, and we regard it as the seminary of the church, the nursery of heaven, the mother of the world, a school for the exercise of many great virtues, and the strictest union and nearest relation, that can be established between persons, who by it are made one in the same flesh; consequently the source of the greatest comfort, and most perfect enjoyment, on earth, of all the advantages of friendship and reciprocal offices of tender love. But then, the obligations and difficulties of this state are likewise very great, and, if the marriage be unhappy, nothing can be more so; instead of a comfort, it then becomes the greatest plague in life; and instead of being a band of union, it is a perpetual slavery; instead of being an exercise of virtue and a state of sanctity, it is an endless source of disorder and sin. Hence, persons become bad citizens and bad servants. Confusion and vice reign in private families, and the whole world is over-run with a violation of every duty, and with all manner of disorders.

3. Almighty God in his most tender providence has furnished christians with the most powerful helps and the most sovereign means to sanctify

their marriages, and fortify themselves against these difficulties. But the general neglect or abuse of them is the great evil, to which we are obliged to ascribe the misfortune of the daily disappointments, which happen. Unhappy marriages not only make the parties temporally miserable, but also involve them in spiritual ruin, fill families with all manner of evils and disturbances, are attended with a bad education of children, and are truly the bane of a commonwealth. To prevent such fatal mischiefs, no one ought to engage in this state without mature deliberation and a virtuous intention.

That marriage is not to be embraced rashly or on some sudden notion, we have but to consider the example of such persons as have acted thus imprudently, whose remaining life is a fruitless repentance, as soon as their visionary dreams are over. Secondly, that it is a choice of the highest importance, both for their temporal and eternal welfare, and on which mainly depends the happiness or misery of the rest of their lives. Thirdly, that it is an unchangeable state for life, and in which no noviceship is allowed as before entering a religious order, though frequently its difficulties and burdens are much greater and much less known. Fourthly, that it is always a state of many cares and troubles, and a perpetual train of concerns, crosses, and pains, in the management of temporal affairs, education of children, and government of a family. Fifthly, that by it a person stakes himself down a captive for life, binding himself, and resigning the dominion and disposal of himself over to another, and perhaps, to one of a very unsuitable temper, foolish, melancholy, jealous, furious, sordid, haughty, untractable, or perverse. To be thus tied down to an extravagant humour, is compared by some to that barbarous invention of tyrants, who coupled the living to a dead carcase, that they might live a lingering death. It is therefore, a necessary caution for all young persons, that they be upon their guard against all flattering speeches of seduction, not to listen to them, for fear of being inveigled by them to their ruin, and never to be drawn into a snare, so far as to part with their liberty by any rash promise, the occasions and dangers of which must be scrupulously shunned.

4. A pious intention is the first thing required to draw down the divine blessing on marriage; but a condition often wanting. One is tempted to marry, only to be independent, to be rid of the check of a watchful parent or aunt; but soon finds it far worse, to be tied to one person, with many imperfections and faults, which are to be borne with and suffered. Another marries upon a sudden passion of fondness or carnal love, which he imagines will be perpetual; but sudden passions, though ever so violent, are as suddenly changed, especially if founded on corporal beauty, or other fading qualities. Necessity and hardships amongst the poor, or pride, crosses, or peevishness amongst the rich, soon extinguish that passion; and then all is misery, and the very person becomes hateful. Most persons engage in this state, promising themselves mountains of gold or pleasures, and finding, instead thereof, anxiety, miseries, and antipathy, are the more tormented at the disappointment. Some are induced to marry out of a motive of covetousness: but they usually meet their own punishment in the very state itself, which they abuse, and convert into a market of money.

The only motives or intentions, which virtue allows, are, first, to seek that individual society of the other sex for the mutual succour, which the instinct of nature directs to procure in the affairs of life.

Secondly, to bring up children in the service of God, who may perpetuate his honour on earth, and people heaven; the noble ends, for which God has instituted the propagation of mankind. Thirdly, it is a lawful, though imperfect motive, to seek, by lawful marriage, a remedy against temptations of the flesh; 1 Cor. vii., though this ought at most to be only a secondary motive, either in embracing or in the use of marriage. See St. Austin, l. de bono conj., c. 7, 10, 13, &c. St. Gregory the great, de cur. past. 3, P. c. 28. St. Thomas in 4 dist. 31, a, 2, ad. 2. St. Bonaventure, &c.

5. The light and direction of the Holy Ghost are to be implored by earnest and persevering prayer, alms, and the practice of other good works, both in the deliberation concerning this state, and in the choice of a wife. A party is to be sought in the first place, eminent for her purity of faith, and all virtues and spiritual endowments. St. Chrysostom elegantly shows this by the example of Abraham, so solicitous to procure a wife for his son Isaac from amongst the true servants of God. Hom. 46, in Gen.

A deliberation proportioned to the difficulty and importance of the choice is absolutely necessary. The blessed Trinity created man, as it were, by common counsel. "Let us make man to our own image." What man will purchase an estate without knowing the extent and nature of it, and after mature consideration? "Bestow thy daughter, and thou shalt have done a great work; and give her to a prudent man." Eccl. vii. 27. "A holy and a modest woman is a grace upon grace." Eccl. xxvi. 19. A wife of virtue, prudence, and conduct will be the greatest comfort, support, and treasure. "He who has found a good wife has found a good thing, and will reap joy from the Lord." Prov. xvii. 22. "Her prudence and piety will be infinitely the best fortune. A wise woman buildeth her house; but the unwise one will destroy with her hands, that which is built." Prov. xiv. 1. The chief marks of such a one are meekness, humility, devotion, application, love of work, and of abiding at home.

But where shall such a one be found! Sir John More inculcating this maxim to his son Sir Thomas, the celebrated chancellor, compares a man, going to marry, to one who should put his hand into a sack, in which were ninety-nine serpents, and only one eel: it is ninety-nine to one that he will lay hold of a venomous creature, and be bit sorely. God is to be earnestly consulted by prayer. He will conduct those, who thus open their hearts to him, as he did the young Tobias to Sara. "A house and riches are given by parents, but a prudent wife properly by the Lord." Prov. xix. 14. The advice of spiritual directors is not to be omitted. As parents would sin grievously, who should not leave marriage to their children's free choice and deliberation, as it is their personal engagement; so children sin mortally against the respect and obedience, which they owe to parents, if they marry against their consent, or without their advice, unless the parents' opposition be notoriously unjust.

Unsuitable matches between persons of very different ranks usually produce dissension among relations, and many other evils, which render them in general unlawful before God. St. Chrysostom in his homily on this subject, (Hom. Quales uxores sint ducendæ, t. 3, 13, 217.) "Let us seek only one thing, virtue and good manners, that we may enjoy perpetual peace and benevolence. For he, who marries a rich wife, chooses rather a

mistress than a wife. And riches are sooner scattered than any cloud. But a modest woman knows how to make a good use even of poverty."

6. Matrimony is a great sacrament, as it is called by the apostle, on account of its founder Christ, and of the great mystery which it represents, viz., the eternal espousal of Christ with his church: and on account of the great ends for which it was instituted, the great and important graces which it bestows, and the great obligations it lays upon those who receive it, to fulfil which it gives the most powerful spiritual succours. The dangers and obligations of this state are of such a nature, that it was a singular mercy of Christ to man, that he was pleased to establish this holy sacrament to qualify and strengthen him to comply more easily and perfectly with them, and live up to the sanctity of his calling. Yet we see marriage defiled and filled with all manner of disorders, even amongst Christians. Nor can we be surprised at this general desolation, if we consider, that, though no sacrament be more necessary, yet no sacrament is more criminally profaned. Men receive it full of the world and their passions, and with very little preparations. What wonder then, that they find their abuse of it a source of maledictions! The devil knows that, if he defile christian marriages, he shall hence easily infect the whole commonwealth with a deluge of sin. His stratagem succeeds. From the abuse of this holy sacrament and state flow the numberless evils, under which we groan.[a]

Those, who desire to escape the wrecks both of soul and body in this state, must be careful to bring the best preparation possible to this holy sacrament, and to the nuptial bed, by all the conditions above mentioned, by a long course of prayer, a most perfect repentance and purity of heart, and by the most holy intention and motives.

7. In the holy ceremonies with which this sacrament is conferred, the ring, blessed and put on the woman's finger, signifies fidelity of heart and mouth, and that their mutual love and engagement are not to be ended but by death. The piece of money shows, that the husband promises her his care and provision, and her acknowledgment of his authority in the administration, in which she can claim no other strict right than what is allowed for the direction of the interior domestic affairs, though the husband ought to share with her all his concerns, as prudence and confidence shall suggest. The joining of hands signifies mutual help between the two parties in prosperity and adversity. The blessing of the priest is to beg of God plentiful grace, fruitfulness, concord, peace, and prosperity temporal and spiritual. Paranymphs are sometimes employed in this sacrament, to offer the bride to the bridegroom, to represent how God brought Eve to Adam, and to show that the intention of marriage is the glory of God and the procreation and education of children. The essence of the contract consists in the mutual free engagement exteriorly expressed by each party, by which they deliver to each other the dominion of their persons. The day of marriage ought all to be employed in devotion, following the example of the young Tobias. All passion is to be excluded from the intention in approaching each other, lest they fall under the power of the devil Asmodæus, who slew the seven lustful husbands of Sara. The

[a] Fœcunda culpæ secula nuptias
Primum inquinavere et genus et domos;
Hoc fonte derivata clades
In patriam populumque fluxit.

solemn benediction in matrimony is given to the spouses before the people, because the mass is chiefly applied to them. The priest also prays for their special graces after the Pater noster, in which he had prayed for their general necessities in the petitions.

A happy marriage is a holy and inviolable league, an honourable alliance, a sweet society maintained with constancy, mutual trust, a continual chain of good offices and duties mutually paid, a reciprocity of chaste affections, entire friendship, will, inclinations, persons, interests, and goods. The principal obligations of the parties are love, fidelity, the education of children, and care of their temporal affairs. The superiority of the husband is clear from the old and new Testament. It is founded in nature itself, and in the strength, sufficiency, and majesty of his sex, and the softness and weakness of the other. He therefore owes to the wife, as the weaker vessel, singular tenderness, compassion, complaisance, care, support, and protection. The wife owes to him submission and reasonable obedience. It is her duty to make his temper her study, and to soften his passions by her unwearied sweetness, tenderness, and compassion for his weaknesses. As she loves and honours him, she is to show this, and to set him off in words and behaviour, without fulsome affectation, as her glory. She must give him the deference in all affairs, and attribute to him the honour of every thing. It is the amiable qualification of her sex, to be humble, modest, reserved in words, loving and peaceable. By this conduct she will gain her husband and others to God, and be the blessing of her family.

8. Mutual constant love and affection is the first duty of the married state. It is the strictest alliance, the closest and the most indissoluble union on earth, which is to be in hearts, in concerns, and in bodies, so that they be two in the same flesh. Christ could not give us a greater idea of this than by declaring it, through his apostle Paul, to be a great mystery, the image of his union with his church, on which he imprints his spirit to the end of the world. To break an alliance so sacred must be a crying sacrilege. Adam expresses the tie of this conjunction of man and wife in these strong words confirmed by Christ: "A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh." Gen. ii. 24. "Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh." Mark x. 7, 8. Upon which St. Chrysostom says, (Hom. 45, in Gen. t. 4, p. 458,) "As the body is never divided from itself, nor the soul against itself, so neither man and wife should be ever divided, but always united." And upon those words of St. Paul, (Tit. ii. 2,) "To love their husbands," he writes thus: "This is the principal foundation of domestic peace and of all good, if the wife in all things agree with her husband. Where this is, nothing can happen sorrowful. If the head be united with the body, all things must be in peace. If princes agree, who can divide the people? But if these disagree, nothing can go well, and the whole family must totter. Nothing is greater or more necessary than this. It goes far beyond riches, nobility, power, honours: it is most useful for all things."

9. Mutual fidelity and continency are the second great conjugal duty, which they inviolably promise to each other and to God, who seals and confirms their engagement by the sacred band of the sacrament, which draws its force of binding and cementing them into one from the adorable blood of Christ. Hence adultery is a profanation of this sacrament, a violation of the most solemn and inviolable contract, a grievous injustice to the injured party in what is more precious than his estate.

A marriage, without mutual love and union, is a kind of hell: for a perpetual cohabitation with one, whose person and conversation are disagreeable, and who is an object of aversion, joined with the thought that only death can be a deliverance, makes such a situation more uneasy than can be expressed. To prevent this misfortune is often more difficult than is generally imagined. All a person's imperfections, capricious tempers, and bad humours; every folly, impertinence, vanity, &c., discover themselves in wedlock. The demeanour towards externs is obliging and agreeable; but in a domestic life the mask is taken off, and a person appears such as he or she really is. Hence it is incredible, how much a person has to suffer from a husband, who is capricious, haughty, choleric, untractable; or what a sensible man has to endure with an unreasonable wife. How hard not to imbibe each other's pride, ambition, avarice, anger, or not be engaged to connive at and favour them; or flatter by condescension the other's vices, &c.

In the degrees of chastity, the first rank is that of virginity; the second is that of continency, as in the holy widowhood; the third is that of conjugal chastity, which has its special merit. The fathers unanimously distinguished these states in this order. See St. Austin, St. Chrysostom, the ancient author of the book "on Purity," amongst the works of St. Cyprian, &c. Indeed conjugal chastity has its conflicts; which, in some circumstances, may be much more severe and troublesome than in a state of virginity, as during the sickness of either party, and in several other cases. Sir Thomas More declared that he found it so by experience. Marriage is, indeed, a remedy against temptations of the flesh, as St. Paul, St. Austin, &c., call it; but then it is a violent one. Any excess or intemperance in the lawful use of marriage is a venial sin, as St. Austin has wrote whole books to prove. And any sin against purity, whether in thought, word, or action, is aggravated by the sanctity of that state. It is to be advised, that they observe strict continency on festivals, fasts, and the days before and after communion, as St. Charles admonishes; which was strictly commanded by several ancient canons, now in disuse. Monsr. Villefore has made an ample collection of them. St. Paul advises married persons to continency for a time to apply themselves to prayer. It is pointed out by nature during the corporal infirmities of the sex, (Lev. xx. 1,) though the marriage duty cannot in justice be absolutely refused, if lawfully asked.

10. Patience is an indispensable virtue of this state, which being engaged in a variety of worldly affairs, always inconstant and uncertain, is exposed to frequent crosses and trials from disappointments and failures in concerns; whence tribulation is the portion of the married. "Such shall have tribulation of the flesh." 1 Cor. vii. 28. The parties will likewise have a great deal to suffer from one another. No one is without some imperfection of mind or body; and both husband and wife will have often enough to forgive each other, and always something to bear. Life is long for persons, who are always together night and day; nor can any one enjoy a perpetual flow of health, cheerfulness, and spirits. Those who have more to bear, having a wife or husband of an untoward or brutish temper, must provide themselves with more than an ordinary stock of patience, and look upon this circumstance as ordained by God for the exercise of their virtue, as Socrates on that account thought it a gain to virtue, that he had the most intolerable shrew for a wife. The christian is to

consider, that it is by this trial he is to be saved. St. Chrysostom speaks thus on the subject: "Thy wife is perpetually at war with thee; when thou comest into thy house, she meets thee like some wild beast, and whets her tongue like a sharp sword against thee. It is indeed a severe circumcumstance, that thy assistant is to become thy adversary. But examine yourself, if in your youth you have not, by some levity or crime, provoked the divine justice, by which you have deserved this chastisement; and your wife is employed by God to heal your wound. She does the office of a spiritual surgeon, and, though she does not know the wounds which she cuts, the physician, who is God, knows them." In Ps. 3, p. 3. F. C. ed. Ben., &c. Patience and sweetness will have some effect on the most savage heart, and will, in the end, often convert it to God; at least it will mitigate and soften it, and gain the greatest crown of glory. Read the life of St. Monica. The good effect of a respectful, officious, and condescending love, joined with a virtuous example, is incredible. St. Jerom said of Læta, in his high figurative style: "I believe that Jupiter himself, if he had such a wife, would have believed in Christ." "If the husband be savage or harsh," says St. Basil, "a wife must bear him. Does he strike or beat, but he is your husband; he is linked to you by nature, and is your member." l. 7, Hex.

11. The principal obligation and end of marriage is the good education of children. St. Charles orders that parents be admonished, whilst the mother is with child, daily to recommend and offer her fruit earnestly to God, begging his blessing and grace, that it may ever faithfully serve his divine majesty, and still more after its birth and baptism; receiving it from the sacred font as a most precious treasure entrusted to them by God, to be preserved in innocence and sanctity, and prepared to be a citizen of heaven. St. Charles and the rituals admonish, that children from the first use of reason, if possible, be laid in separate beds, especially those of different sexes.

It suffices to add here, that the greatest comforts of a married state are to be expected from good children, as the most severe trials are also from them, if disobedient and untractable. Even the afflictions from their sickness, death, and the like accidents deterred Thales from marrying, not to expose his virtue to so dangerous a trial, which Solon himself was not able to bear, as we read in a memorable example in his life, in Plutarch.

Set children no example of irregular passions; teach them from their cradle to curb their own; guard them from all impressions, which tend to kindle their passions, or the love of the world, and to extinguish in them the grace of God. Watch against bad company; instruct them early in the maxims and spirit of piety, &c.

Lastly, how difficult is it to live in the hurry of the world, and not be carried away by the torrent of its dispositions, spirit, and maxims! to live in it so as not to be of it, but in the midst of its whirlpool to maintain one's self steady in the maxims and spirit of our holy faith.

DISCOURSE LVI.

ON THE ENORMITY OF IMPURITY.

1. IMPURITY is a crime, which ought not even to be named among christians. "Let not fornication or any sort of uncleanness be even mentioned among us, as it becometh saints." Eph. v. 3. Such ought to be the purity, such the sanctity of a christian, that he ought only to know the name of this vice to abhor and detest it, and never to defile his lips with mentioning it, or his mind with its remembrance, that he may truly be a fellow of the angels, and a son of God, who is the infinite, holy, and most pure spirit. But alas! the havoc, which this wicked demon makes among souls, obliges us to transgress this holy law, though the subject calls for our tears rather than for words. For when we consider the desolation, which it brings upon the whole earth, the innumerable sins, which it causes, the disorders and misfortunes, into which it precipitates men, and the divine judgments, temporal and eternal, which it brings down upon them; when we see the innocent age of youth often corrupted by this infamous sin, the most flourishing portion of God's church dishonoured by this detestable vice, and the first fruits of the lives of many stolen from God, and consecrated to the devil by this deplorable evil, what heart is not pierced with sorrow, crying out with Jeremiah: "Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will bewail night and day?" Jer. ix. 1. To inspire ourselves with a just abhorrence of this soul-destroying monster, and with a saving dread of its dangers, it is necessary to consider how heinous this sin is in the sight of God.

2. Whilst sin reigned almost without controul, after the fall of our first parents, in this vice it principally shows its empire over men. By it "the earth was defiled before God, and was filled with iniquity: for all flesh had corrupted its way upon earth." Gen. vii. 11, 12. "God seeing that much was the malice of men on earth, and that all the thoughts of their heart were intent on doing evil at all times, it repented him that he had made man on earth; and being touched inwardly with grief of heart, he said; I will exterminate man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; from man to brute creatures, and from the reptile to the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them." Gen. iv. 5, 6, 7. This threat he executed by the universal deluge, by which, to purge the earth from the abominations of impurity with which it was defiled, he drowned the whole race of Adam, except Noe and his family, whom he preserved in the ark. Sodom and Gomorrha, with the neighbouring cities, in punishment of the unnatural lust, to which they had abandoned themselves, were destroyed by a shower of fire and brimstone from heaven, which God rained down upon them; and by which the most fruitful and delightful spot of the whole country was changed into an impure lake of stinking waters. Gen. xix, 24. And of their inhabitants, on account of this sin, the Holy Ghost pronounces: "The Sodomites were sinners, and the worst of sinners in the sight of God. Gen. xiii. 13. Twenty-four thousand Israelites were put to death for this abominable crime, and many thousands defeated and destroyed several ways for these and other similar abominations, as we read in the sacred history. Of Onan it is recorded;

"He was slain by the Lord, because he was guity of a shocking crime." Gen. xxxviii. 10. If this sin deserve so remarkable a vengeance in that age of ignorance and weakness, what shall we say of its enormity when committed by christians under the law of grace, and amidst the light of the gospel! But what is that, which so much aggravates the malice of this sin, and which, above other vices, heaven will not bear?

3. The characteristical malice of this vice consists in this, that by it a man defiles and sins against his own body. The nearer and dearer this ought to be to him, the greater the purity and sanctity with which he is bound to adorn it, the more grievous is the enormity of this crime. "Every sin, that a man doeth, is without the body; but he, that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body. 1 Cor. vi. 18. Hence sins, which immediately attack the majesty of God, as blasphemy, sacrilege, perjury, &c. and also spiritual sins, as pride or envy, are usually more grievous than sins of the flesh as to this circumstance; but these being committed by a man against his own flesh, a nearer and more noble object than the goods of fortune, or any thing external to him, and more heinous than sins of theft, or the like. Moreover, on other accounts, the malice of any sin of impurity is exceedingly enhanced. For first, it effaces the image of God in man in the most horrible and outrageous manner. He has been pleased to imprint upon us the adorable lineaments of himself; has given us a spiritual and immortal soul, endowed with reason, and a pure spirit like himself; and this not only capable of, but by his bounty and goodness enriched with the gifts of his grace and supernatural virtues. Now the carnal man not only strips his soul of its empire and domion over the body, which, by its nature, dignity, and the divine order, it ought to rule, command, and govern, but he basely enslaves it to the flesh by a more monstrous inversion of nature, than if he had placed, I do not say the vilest and most stupid slave, but the most filthy, base, weak, and savage beast, or an impotent insect, on a royal throne to govern a glorious kingdom of men. What must be the indignation of the angels to see a noble soul, their sister by nature and grace, the glory of the whole material world, degraded and reduced to the most base slavery imaginable to its own corruptible flesh, which it was formed to command and rule in sanctity! What would be your compassion, what your indignation, if you saw a great empress at once stript of her dominions, crowns, jewels, royal robes and every mark of honour, and reduced to the most vile and barbarous slavery, covered with filth, and condemned to feed hogs and cleanse their sties? Your soul is a heavenly queen, and sister to the angels; but by this horrible sin she is on a sudden degraded from her dignity, despoiled of all her graces and gifts, and reduced to the most infamous and cruel servitude. And she, who before bore the image of God, now wears that of the devil: the very traces of the former are defaced. The higher the dignity and the honour, the more noble the privilege, and the greater the advantage of human nature to bear a resemblance with the divinity, the more henious affront it is, and the more outrageous an insult, to deface this divine image. The emperor Thedosius fell into the most violent transports of fury, when his statutes had been thrown into the dirt at Thessalonica. But here it is the image of God, and this not carved in stone, or drawn by a pencil in colours, but his spiritual and living image that is erased. Every mortal sin indeed disfigures and blots out the most noble lineaments of the divine image in the soul, which consist in grace,

charity, and sanctity, as the fathers observe: but no sin does this in so foul a manner as that of impurity, which not only exterminates grace, but renders the soul itself quite carnal, and worse than brutish, enslaved to the most furious and unbridled appetites of lust. "Do you reflect whose image you have defiled, to whom you have offered the affront?" St. Chrys. "What a shame is it, that a crooked mind should dishonour an erect body? Shall a spiritual and eternal substance grovel on earth? Shall a soul created to fill a throne debase herself to the condition of a swine and wallow in the mire? Blush, my soul, to have exchanged the divine resemblance for the nature and the habits of brutes. Blush, my soul, to have forgotten thy heavenly origin. Blush, says the body, when you consider my situation." St. Bern. Serm. 24, in Cant. n. 6, p. 1348.

4. Christians are, moreover, consecrated to God by his grace and baptism: they are the members of Christ's body. Now what a crime must it be to take the members of so noble a head, and make them the members of a harlot, as St. Paul expresses it to strike into us an abhorrence of this vice. 1 Cor. vi. 15. This is an outrage, which no one can think of without horror, to tear from him a body, which he had consecrated to himself, and to deliver it a slave to his mortal enemy. What an insult! What a sacrilege! What a persecution against Christ, worse than that of Saul's! "Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" Acts ix. Is this your return for all his infinite benefits, and especially for that of your redemption? If you have no regard for your own dignity or advantage, no compassion for your own soul; at least respect Christ in yourself. "The body is a member of Christ; whither art thou hurrying? Return to Christ. Into what a precipice art thou falling? Spare Christ in thyself. Acknowledge Christ in thee. "Taking up the members of Christ, shall I make them the members of a strumpet?" St. Aug. Serm. 161, ol. 18, de verbis Ap. p. 775, t. 5,

We are also the temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in us by his graces. He who fills the heavens and the earth with his immensity, and who is present to, and exists in, all things, even in the wicked, resides in a particular manner in the faithful christian, with infinite complacency, making his heart his throne, anointing him with his grace, and making him his most holy temple. The priest in baptism drives out the devil, and repeats in his exorcisms; "Depart from him, thou impure spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost."[a] But the impure man outrageously chases away the Divine Spirit, saying by his actions, though not in words, what fills us with horror: Depart, Holy Spirit, and give place to the unclean spirit. What an injury and insult to the Divine Spirit! "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy; which you are." 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. How do you abhor the sacrileges of Baltassar in profaning the sacred vessels, for which he was so severely punished by God; of Antiochus in polluting the temple, for which he fell a terrible victim to the divine justice; and other examples recorded in holy writ: yet these impious wretches profaned only God's material temple. But by impurity a man pollutes his living temple in himself. "Know you not, that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your

[a] Exi ab eo, immunde spiritus, & da locum spiritui sancto,

own? For you are bought at a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body." 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. "Wherever thou goest, Jesus sees thee, the Jesus that made thee, redeemed thee when lost, and died for thee to recall thee to life. Thou forgottest thyself, but his eyes are constantly fixed on thee, not to assist, but to punish thee. The countenance of God is on the doers of evil, that he may blot out the remembrance of them on earth." St. Aug. Serm. 161, olim 18, de verbis Ap. p. 775, t. 5, ed. Ben.

"If we are so offended at the thought of seeing the material temple of God turned into a hog-sty, or filled with dirt and rubbish, what must we think of ourselves, if in the living temple of God we admit unclean and filthy thoughts? St. Cæsarius, Hom. 3, 19, 20.

5. The terrible effects of this sin of impurity sets its enormity and evil still in a higher light. Every sinner in the language of our blessed Redeemer has the devil for his father, and is himself a devil. But this agrees in a particular manner to the vice of impurity, because this produces in the soul the greatest opposition to God, by the greatest aversion of the will from him, and the greatest blindness in the understanding. Men enslaved to impurity find a repugnance even to think on God, or to look up to heaven. They, like the unchaste old men, mentioned in Daniel xiii. 9, "have turned aside their eyes, lest they should see heaven, or remember the judgments of the first judge." St. Gregory and St. Thomas observe, that the daughters or effects of lust in a soul are, first, a blindness in the understanding; second, rashness; third, want of consideration; fourth, inconstancy; fifth, self-love; sixth, an hatred of God; seventh, an affection to this present life; and eighth, an horror of the world to come. These are the unhappy progeny of that infamous parent, and they show that even in this world the unchaste man begins his state of damnation. Hell is represented in the gospel as a place of exterior darkness; but the impure libertine, even in this life, lies under an interior darkness of mind. The consideration of divine things makes no impression on his corrupted soul; he sees not the most important spiritual truths, and blinds himself to their consequences. To satisfy his brutal passion he forfeits heaven, and condemns himself to hell for eternity; and to divert the sting of his own conscience, so as not to be disturbed in his base sensual enjoyments, he turns a downright libertine. "Those, who are of the flesh, relish such things as are of the flesh." Rom. viii.

A soul corrupted and defiled by this beastly sin becomes altogether sensual, is drowned in filthy pleasures, and attached to this earth; has no light, no taste, no understanding for the high truths of religion. Impurity gives a great disrelish of all the mysteries of our religion, and an aversion to spiritual things. As a deadly poison it infects the whole soul and extinguishes in her all the noble sentiments of virtue. It often leads at length into the depth of irreligion and atheism. It is a just observation, that pretended atheists in all ages have been slaves to pride and other passions, but, in general, most of all, to impurity. No one doubts of the being of a God but he whose interest it is, that there should be no God. If the sensual liver acknowledge a God, and another world, this is such a conviction of his present folly, so manifest an ingratitude against his Maker, and a reproach so troublesome to his base criminal heart, that the only expedient left him is to dispute these great truths, and to harden his heart against the belief of another life. "The foolish man has said in his heart; there is no God." Ps. lii. 1. He says it in his desire or heart;

for he cannot say it in his understanding, in which is stamped the knowledge of a God. Rather than to be obliged to renounce his darling vices he blinds his understanding, and pretends to live and die hard.

6. Experience also shows, that nothing is so capable of perverting the will as this vice, as well as of blinding the intellect, and confounding reason. Thus does this foul vice corrupt the whole man, all the powers of the soul. "Lust triumphs over the whole man." S. Cyprian. Thus Daniel tells one of the old unchaste men, who assaulted Susanna: "Concupiscence has corrupted thy heart." Of this we read a dreadful example in king Solomon, the wisest of men, some time a prophet, and in certain things a type of Christ; yet in his old age, "his heart was corrupted by women to follow foreign gods." 3 Kings ii. 4.

We see many persons well educated, who have very good inclinations, an aversion from evil, a great affection to piety, the fear of God strongly imprinted in their souls. Now all these good qualities remain, if impurity does not take possession of the heart. But, if this hellish monster once find admittance, it subverts them all. Things now appear far otherwise than they did before. The sin now seems no more so great; it becomes familiar to them; and one who before had a great apprehension of mortal sin, when once overcome by this brutal passion, is not afraid to commit them by hundreds. He, who before could not sleep one night in one mortal sin, now can pass several infected with numbers of them, without apprehension of the judgment of God, going from sin to sin, drinking iniquity like water. Good God! what a change! what a subversion is this! What a havock does this sin make in the soul! Nor do its ravages stop here. For impurity also causes a great disrelish of, and insensibility to, all the mysteries of religion, and an aversion to spiritual things; as a deadly poison it infects the whole soul, and extinguishes in her all noble sentiments of virtue.

Do we not daily see that lust produces a disrelish, and even an aversion to virtue, piety, and devotion? It is not to be conceived, how souls infected with it contract a loathing of divine things. Prayer is tedious to them, the sacraments contemptible; the word of God moves them not; reading pious books is insupportable. This is too manifest by experience, and no wonder. He, who is ill of a fever, takes no delight in the most delicious meats, because his taste is vitiated by bitter juices. Thus a man, who is seized with the burning fever of impurity, finds a wonderful loathing of all that is pious, because he is infected with carnal and impure affections, which permit him not to relish the sweetness of holy things. "The sensual man understands not the things, which are of God." What hopes can there be of a conversion in such persons, since they have an aversion to the means, which must effectually bring it about? The sacraments they either shun and neglect, or approach unworthily. Alas! sacrilegious confessions and communions are common among christians principally through this shameful vice. They, who are not ashamed to commit, fear to disclose it, and thus add to their other sins the most horrible profanations of the adorable blood of Christ.

7. From this same vice springs a most foolish pride and arrogance, which makes the mind despise all admonitions, resist all instructions, and scoff at the most wholesome counsels. "The luxurious man has heard, and he shall be displeased, and shall throw it behind his back." Eccl. xxi. 18. This pride is accompanied with a strange obdurateness of the

will. For impurity imitates the malice of the devils, and their obstinacy in evil. The damned in hell grieve for their past wickedness, but for their own sake only; not for any love of God, their will being fixed in evil, and their miserable state of reprobation being joined with obstinacy; for could they in hell change their will and be converted, hell would cease to be hell; but their state admits of no change. Now the sin of impurity leads to this state of obstinacy in evil more than any other vice whatever. Whence St. Thomas observes, that, though spiritual sins, such as pride, are of their own nature more grievous, yet those of the flesh are of the strongest adhesion or attachment. On which account the devils chiefly delight in enslaving men to this sin, and place in it their chief strength. "Men become slaves to the devil by impurity more than by any other vice," says St. Bernard, Serm. 23, de more bene vivendi.

Habits of this vice are harder to be broken than any other, and more strongly enslave the soul than any other sin, as experience makes evident. How many times have unchaste sinners confessed their crimes, pretending to detest them, to change their lives, and to break their fetters; who yet have miserably relapsed almost on the first occasion, remaining still slaves to this infamous passion? The devil of impurity has returned with seven other devils worse than the first, as our Saviour represents to us the condition of such persons. Luke xi. St. Peter speaks of this sin as a vice that never ceases, "Full of unceasing guilt." 2 Pet. ii. 4. The prophet Hosea laments their impenitent state, when the evil spirit of fornication has once found entrance. "They will not turn their thoughts towards returning to God, because the spirit of fornication is among them." Hosea v. Such a miserable soul is sold as it were a slave to sin, to use the expression of St. Paul. Rom. vii.

The difficulty of breaking the chains of these habits puts a soul under a kind of terrible necessity. "Let him, that is in filth, grow filthier still." Apoc. xxii. 11.

These inveterate habits often lead men into absolute despair, which complete their ruin by final impenitence. "In despair they have given themselves up to uncleanness." Ephes. iv. 19. Plunged into the gulph of despair they abandon themselves to all excesses of impurity, and it is their portion to pass from the flames of lust into the lake of fire and brimstone, as St. John says: "Some of them in a lake of fire and brimstone." Apoc. xxi. 8.

O how dismal are the effects of this vice in the souls of men! This sin of final impenitence is the accomplishment of all the rest, the mark at which all the before mentioned aim; an effect so dreadful, that we cannot mention it without horror, nor think of it without dread or apprehension. For death in mortal sin is of all evils the most frightful and irretrievable. The lascivious man, on account of the former effects, is certainly in the most deplorable condition; he is an enemy of God, the slave of the devil, and the object of reprobation. But still he lives; and whilst he lives, all hopes are not lost. But to cause a death in sin, to infer final impenitence; O let not the tongues of men or angels pretend to express this calamity. "There is no hope for the impious man after death." This alone can find no redemption; neither the supplication of saints, nor the blood of martyrs, nor the penance of confession, nor the precious blood of Christ itself, sufficient to redeem ten thousand worlds, will ever wash it away. Yet this is the ordinary effect of impurity. Death surprises by some accident, or else in obduracy or despair, or with a half and insufficient

death-bed repentance. "God knows how to save the just under temptation, and to reserve the wicked for eternal fire; especially such as have walked in the path of lust and uncleanness." 2 Peter ii. 9. Thus final impenitence closes the unhappy career of evils flowing from this vice. To relate one example: St. Gregory the great tells us, (Dial. l. 4.) that there was one Chrysoarius, a man of quality, and very rich, but abounding with vices as much as with wealth, and above all addicted to sins of the flesh God resolving to put a period to his crimes sent him a severe sickness, of which he died, but in a very extraordinary manner. Approaching to the term of his distemper he suddenly perceived a multitude of evil spirits, who presented themselves to him in hideous shapes, and made a show as if they were going immediately to carry him into hell. He began to tremble, look aghast, and lamentably cry for succour. He turned himself on every side to avoid the sight of those horrid spectres; but which way soever he moved, they were continually before his eyes. After many strugglings, finding himself oppressed, and violently treated by the wicked spirits, he began horribly to cry out: "Truce till morning; Truce till morning." And in these dreadful exclamations his wretched soul was torn from his body in miserable despair.

These are the dismal effects of the sin of impurity, which yet many call by the soft name of a sin of frailty; but to such St. Paul says: "Deceive not yourselves; neither fornicators nor adulterers, &c. shall enter into the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. vi. 10.

8. The unclean devil who slew the seven husbands, to whom Sarah had been married one after another, because they took her to wife not in the fear of God, but to gratify their lust, (Tob. vi. 17,) was called Asmodæus, which name signifies an abundance of iniquity, and a destroyer, expressing the dreadful effects and the numberless sins, of which this vice is the fruitful parent by glances and every one of the senses; by thoughts, by desires, by words, and by actions; often also by quarrels, flatteries, detractions, calumnies, lies, rash judgments, disobedience and contempt of parents, and almost every other sin. The greatest disorders of the world flow secretly from this source; and this sin chiefly fills hell with souls; for more are eternally damned by this vice than by all other sins. "This is the most dangerous vice to mankind," as St. Gregory the great says.

Alcuin writes: "The devil triumphs over the whole human race by pride and fornication." L. de civ. offic. c. 13.

9. We must add, that the God of all purity has stamped upon these sins a mark of the utmost infamy and contempt. Persons once guilty of them, if it be known, forfeit all claim to any honour or reputation in the world; and the very name of debauchery carries with it the utmost degree of shame, infamy, and confusion. St. Austin observes often it is so base, that above all other sins it covers with disgrace, and seeks to be concealed, for which he gives this reason: "We should be ashamed to let the body enslave the mind, which was appointed to command." L. 14, de civ. 6, n. 3, 5, p. 373, ed. Ben.

Impure love if indulged is not to be called a passion, like other vices, but a perfect fury; for it allows no rest, and knows no end or bounds in sinning. "Lust is a cruel incentive to sin. It nevers suffers the passions to rest. It burns at night, it sighs in the day time; it awakens from sleep; it unfits for business, overpowers nature, silences prudence, torments the lover, overthrows the frail, betrays the chaste, and acquires strength from

habit. There is no end to its transgressions; it is a burning thirst after sin, which death alone can assuage. Whence the apostle warns us: 'fly fornication;' and make haste to quit the cruel slavery of an imperious mistress." St. Ambrose, l. 1, de Abel & Cain, c. 5, p. 180, t. 1. Voluptuous persons, as a penitent, who had formerly experienced the misery of that state, one day told me, find themselves possessed with a violent passion for corporeal pleasure, and with an impudent and furious devil, who is seated in their hearts, where he gives sensible proofs of his presence. He burns them in temptation with a fire like a boiling furnace, takes from them all fear of God, makes them contemn the flames of hell, gives them a loathing of prayer, takes away their reason, and quite blinds them. Happy are they, who never felt the miseries of this war. Let us pray, that God preserve us from the cruel experience of it; for they, who are fallen into this gulph, cannot easily rise, and stand in need of sweats, fastings, and extraordinary abstinence to draw themselves out of this abyss. S. John Climacus, grad. 15.

10. On account of the singular heinousness of this sin, and the difficulty of its cure, in the primitive ages the penances enjoined for it were particularly long and severe, as may be seen in the penitential canons; to which St. Charles orders confessors always to attend in prescribing penances. The sins of impurity, together with those of idolatry and murder, were objects of public and canonical punishment. Seven years were enjoined by St. Basil for fornication, ep. 3, ad Amphiloch. can. 15, t. 1, ed. Beveteg. p. 115. For adultery some canons prescribed fifteen years, and others a still longer period. For sodomy the whole life of the penitent was thought scarcely sufficient. Every indecent act, such as immodest touches either of one's self or others, was subjected to strict punishment; so that even for an immodest word three days penance was required. See Canones pœnitentiales Reginonis a Baluzio editi; item Burchardi, l. 10, cap. 56.

From this discipline of the church, guided by the spirit of God, St. John Climacus, having written much on the enormity of this vice, adds, that a certain learned man asked him, why the church inflicted penances of so many years for sins of lust more than for other sins, which seemed more grievous, (e. g.) heresy; to which he was able to give no answer; grad. 15. But abbot John of Raithe in his annotations, (ib. Bibl. Patr. t. 6, part 2, p. 305,) answers, that heresy is often excused by ignorance, whereas sins of lust are committed most voluntarily, by free choice, barely for the sake of criminal pleasure, and without the least plea of ignorance or other excuse. And in other sins the conversion is more easy and entire; whereas in lust a penitent requires time and many tears to heal the wound of concupiscence, and extinguish the sting of pleasure. "Three deadly sins are to be punished by excommunication: impurity, idolatry, and murder." St. Aug. l. de fide & operibus, c. 13. Nay the fathers say, that impurity deserves a more severe chastisement than a forced idolatry. "Which of the two more shamefully denies Christ, the person who yields to torments, or who is overcome by pleasure; he who regrets his own weakness, or he who enjoys the fruits of his treachery." Tert. l. de pudicitia. "The man, who is a slave to lust, has no excuse. He cannot plead necessity, since he sins with perfect freedom." St. Cyprian, ep. 2, ad. Antonian.

DISCOURSE LVII.

ON THE DIFFERENT SPECIES OF SINS OF IMPURITY.

1. THAT precept of the law of nature, which is comprised in the sixth commandment of the decalogue, condemns whatever defiles the purity either of mind or body. Of impurity there are six complete species. First, adultery or carnal commerce of one with a married person, not one's own wife or husband. This is a grievous crime, which in one comprises many sins; for it is an injury done to the sacrament and sacred bond of matrimony, and to God its author; and it is at the same time a crime against chastity, charity, and justice. Nor can the consent of wife or husband diminish any single circumstance of this guilt; because no one can alienate or transfer to another the right, which marriage gives him alone. If both the partners in this sin be married, it is a double adultery. The enormous sin of adultery has been always most severely punished even among barbarous nations. By a law of Constantine the great it was punished with death. L. 1, de pœnis, Cod. Theodos.

Incest is a carnal commerce with a person within the four forbidden degrees either of consanguinity or of affinity. This prohibition, at least as to the first and second degrees, is a precept of the law of nature. Also, the spiritual affinity, which arises from having been god-father or god-mother in the sacraments of baptism or confirmation, suffices to constitute the crime of incest.

Impurity is a sacrilege, if committed in a place consecrated to the divine worship, or if either party be consecrated to God by a vow either solemn or private, or be engaged in holy orders.

If neither party in criminal commerce be under any of the forementioned circumstances, the crime between persons of a different sex is called simple fornication. Nature clearly points out, that this crime is a violation of its unchangeable law, by the number of both sexes being nearly equal, by the necessity of each sex concurring in the good education of children, and in the care of what concerns them, and by the necessity of preventing the uncertainty of fathers, to whom children belong, and the inconveniencies and mischiefs, which would flow to the commonwealth. Whence St. Paul reckons fornication among the grievous crimes, that exclude men from the kingdom of heaven. Ephs. v. 1. Cor. vi. Rom. i. 22. If the party, that falls into this crime, was before a virgin, this deflowering is a circumstance, which adds a special malice, and constitutes a distinct species in this crime.

A rape is a violent carrying away a person in order to marriage or any intention of lust. If the person be carried off by stratagems or artifices, it is a rape of seduction. The laws of Constantine the great command that he, who has ravished a virgin, whether she consented or not, should be punished by pouring melted lead down his throat. Lege si quis, l. 9, Cod. Theodos. tit. 24, de captu virg. Justinian orders persons convicted of a rape, their accomplices, and assistants to be beheaded. Seq. raptores, l. 9, cod. tit. 13.

2. Though all these species of lust are against nature, there are other crimes, which above the rest destroy all the ends and purposes of nature,

and they are distinguished by the name of lust against nature. Of these sins Tertullian says, "they are monsters, not crimes," l. de pudic. c. 5. Of these sins are reckoned three distinct species; the first is the sin of Onan, or self-pollution, (i. e.) a voluntary shedding of the human seed. This crime destroys all the ends of nature, is an anticipated murder, and, if habitual in youth, the bane of manhood, tending to destroy fruitfulness in marriage, and health and life itself by slow decays. Secondly, the sin of Sodom, which is committed between persons of the same sex. Persons convicted of this crime were condemned to be burned alive, according to the repeated laws of the first christian emperors; lege 6, tit. 7, l. 9, cod. Theodos. The laws of all civilized nations chastise it with death. The old penitential canons extend its penance without the benefit of the sacraments during the whole life of the penitent till the article of death. Thirdly, bestiality or carnal commerce with brutes is a crime still more execrable.

3. These are complete species of this vice; but all imperfect acts, whether of thought, word, looks, kisses, or other actions are grievous mortal sins, and belong to that species, to which they imperfectly tend; whence in case of thoughts, glances, &c. it is necessary to express the object in confession, whether it was a maid, a married woman, &c. For both the positive divine law, and the law of nature command the most perfect purity of mind and body, which is sullied by the least vapour of voluntary impurity. To preclude all pretence or plea of ignorance, God, who forbad this crime in the sixth commandment, added another distinct commandment to condemn all lustful desires or thoughts. And our blessed Saviour declares, that he who looks at a woman with lust, or wilful danger thereof, has already committed the crime with her in his own heart. Mat. v. 28. Hence divines generally teach, that in impurity nothing can be so small or light as to be excused from the guilt of a mortal sin, if it be fully deliberate. St. Antoninus seems to pronounce this of faith, part. 2, tit. 5, c. 1, And Pope Alexander VII. condemned as an error the following assertion: Prop. 40. "It is a probable opinion, that a kiss given for the sake of a carnal and sensible delight, without any danger of farther consent, or of pollution, is no more than a venial sin." In most other points of morality, indeed an abatement, is made so far, that it is on all hands agreed, that the point in which the offence is committed may be so small, that the offence will not be deemed a mortal sin. Thus, though theft or injustice be a mortal sin, yet if it be in a matter so trifling as a penny, the sin is not ordinarily reputed mortal. So neither in a slight anger, in an officious or excusive lie, or the like. But the case is different in respect to purity, as the holy scriptures and the tradition of the church demonstrate. Indeed the light of nature, or reason suffices to show this. For this virtue is so infinitely tender, that it fades and dies if blown upon by the least vapour. The very least allowance here is an immediate and violent occasion of farther consent. As St. Austin observes, lust is a passion, "to which if no resistance be made, it commits the most enormous impurities." l. 4, contra Julian, c. 5. Were it but on this account, that the seeking of any immediate occasion of sin is a mortal sin, the least deliberate liberty in this passion must necessarily be such.

4. Any deliberate thoughts of impurity, though consented to but for one moment, are mortal sins. The law of Christ is holy, and forbids the least irregularity even in the mind or heart only. God requires at your

hand an entire and spotless sacrifice, no less so in the interior than in the exterior. It is from our thoughts that our spiritual life and death begin and take their rise. As the grace, which first begins our conversion and our virtue, is a good thought, so the first step to our fall is a bad thought, which we listen to and harbour. The Son of God places evil thoughts at the head of all crimes, because all others begin by them. They are the source. "From the heart come," &c. Mat. xv. 18. If this be true in theft, murder, and the like sins, it is infinitely more so in impurity, in which there can be no wilful thought, which is not mortal and dangerous. These sins of thought are the more to be shunned, because they easily multiply themselves without number. For one exterior, a man may commit a thousand interior sins. In these neither shame nor want of opportunity is any hindrance, whensoever passion prompts to them. In external sins a man is often tired and deterred by remorse, disquietude, and distaste. Thoughts are sins of all ages and conditions, of all times and places. Nor do they strike so much horror. Alas! how many never scruple at them? never perceive or take notice of them? seldom confess or repent of them? seldom resist or arm themselves against them? Many grievously deceive themselves about sinful thoughts, who imagine desires only to be such. But God teaches us, that every thought of any impure unlawful object, entertained with wilful pleasure, is a mortal sin. Some chaste timorous souls are apt indeed to carry their fears too far, and to be disquieted because they had perceived the proposal of an evil thought made by the enemy in their mind, though they never wilfully entertained it. We must distinguish, first, the involuntary suggestion; secondly, the pleasure; thirdly, the consent to the pleasure or thought; fourthly, the desire or resolution of carrying it into execution. The first is no sin; nor the second, if the will totally refuse its consent to it. A governor of a city may receive a letter of solicitation to treachery without any fault: if he reject the proposal with abhorrence, aad immediately throw the letter into the fire, he will deserve a recompence from his prince, not the punishment due to treason, of which he never entertained the least thought. St. Catherine of Sienna had been a long time molested with a violent temptation of evil thoughts, when Jesus by his presence chased away the enemy, and assured her, that he had been all that time in her heart.

5. If immodest thoughts are criminal, looks, words, or actions are also certainly so. The sight is the quickest of all the senses, and makes, of all others, the most sudden, the deepest and the strongest impression upon the heart. And it is in this passion that it principally triumphs; innumerable souls have perished by one single glance of the eye. "Gaze not upon a maiden, lest her beauty be a stumbling block to thee." Eccl. ix. 5. "Look not round about thee in the ways of the city, nor wander up and down in the streets thereof. Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not about upon another's beauty." ib. v. 7, 8. "For many have perished by the beauty of a woman; and thereby lust is kindled as a fire." v, 9. And Christ declares: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." Mat. v. 28. Upon which words St. Chrysostom, preaching on the crime of assisting at the stage entertainments, spoke thus to his flock: "But you will say, what if I do not look to lust? And how will you be able to persuade me this? For he who will not refrain from the look, how will he be able to remain free from a wound in his soul? Is your body a stone? Is

it iron? You are encompassed with flesh; I say, with human flesh, which is more easily kindled from concupiscence than straw catches the flame. Are you more virtuous or strong than so many great and stout men, who have perished by a single cast of the eye? Have you not heard Solomon saying, Prov. vi. 27, 28. "Shall a man walk upon coals of fire, and not burn his feet? Shall a person bind up fire in his bosom, and not burn his clothes?" The saint then in very strong terms denounces a terrible excommunication against those, who should for the future frequent the theatre. Hom. contr. ludos & theat. p. 274, 275, t. 6, ed Montfauc. St. Clement of Alexandria observes, from those words of Christ, that he, who looks upon a woman, sins on account of the danger; "But we are to refer all beauty to its author, the great Creator, who shows his perfect glory to his angels." Strom. l. 4, p. 520. No one pretends to condemn transient necessary looks of civility, or even to take notice of beauty, providing there be no danger to the heart; but it is always a crime to look at the face of others with lust, or with danger of that vice. Now transient glances are accompanied with this danger, if they proceed from idle curiosity, or from fondness to the person. To fix the eye upon another by a steady look is always a mark of the highest impudence and immodesty. Whence the rule of the Dominican friars says: "Cursed is the man who fixes his eye." And St. Austin writes: "You may cast your eyes on any one, but fix them on none." ep. 211, al. 109.

Some pretend, that by custom, they are not moved at any sight of such objects; that they never reflect on them; and therefore, to them they can be no ways dangerous. But are their eyes so naturalized to them, that their hearts are also become insensible? What a depth of corruption does this insolent plea discover? How long must the eyes have been already criminal before a man arrives at this pitch of stupidity and blindness? By what a series of sins, by what a course of vice must a person have made himself insensible to the guilt which his heart never ceases to commit? How inconsistent is his plea, that a familiarity with carnal objects can at length make the eyes chaste? Let such persons listen to St. Austin: "Do not tell me that your hearts are chaste, if your eyes are unchaste. The lustful eye is the harbinger of an unclean heart." St. Aug. ep. 211, al. 109. And again, "Art thou stronger than David?" in Ps. 50. Alas, such, however they may flatter themselves, live in a circle of sins, which they study to disguise to themselves: they have eyes filled with adulteries, and with never ceasing sin, according to the expression of St. Peter: "having eyes full of adultery and unceasing vice." 1 Pet. ii. 14. St. Ambrose vehemently declaims against the crime of gazing, and says: "If women on a transitory glance are smitten, what must be the consequence of a fixed look? l. 1. de pœnit. c. 13, t. 4, p. 361. St. Chrysostom, (Hom. 17, in Mat. v.) writes: "Do not let me hear you say, that though you looked you were not smitten. The law is clear and needs no comment." He adds: "Glances, if allowed, would often kill the soul; therefore, Christ forbad them. We take a sword out of the hands of a child, because it is dangerous and lest he should hurt himself with it."

6. They are involved in the same guilt, who by their immoderate dress invite the glances of others, as St. Clements of Alexandria remarks, (Pœdag. l. 2, c. 2, p. 158,) and Tertullian, (l. de velanda virgin.) St. Cyprian, (l. de habitu virginum,) and other fathers have proved in entire books and sermons. St. Paul orders all women to be covered in churches

out of respect to the angels, the invisible ministers of God; (1 Cor. xi. 10,) though they have neither eyes of flesh, nor hearts capable of our weaknesses; but because they are jealous of purity in us. Many say, that by their dress they mean no harm. But how will they persuade others to this, though they persuade it to themselves? Many will ascribe their love of dress to its natural cause, the vanity, levity, or wantonness of the heart. Indeed, who can be nice in this particular? who can deviate from the rules of simplicity and gravity in clothing, which both nature and the gospel point out, were it not through a notorious corruption of the heart? A man's exterior is the index of his interior. It is usual for persons to deceive themselves, and to disguise their own hearts from themselves, especially in the case of any favorite passion, which throws a cloud before their eyes. In this case, others will pass a much better judgment on their real sentiments than they themselves upon their own. Every body else will read in their eyes, in their carriage, in their words, and in all their actions, the secret passions of their souls, which they themselves cannot, or rather will not discern, or own. St. Chrysostom pronounces this to be the case of those, who excuse to themselves an affected passion for dress, and thinks that it announces in a language, that cannot deceive, a great interior disorder of the mind, a wantonness and levity of the heart. But suppose it did not spring from such a passion, it would still not be free from a heinous malice; because it is a snare laid for the chastity of others. And the evil would be less, if such instruments of sin threw their poison only into corrupted hearts, of which the world is full; this would be only the adding of a new weight to those, who were already casting themselves headlong into hell. But what have the elect children of God done, that human beings should assist the devil in laying stratagems to seduce and destroy them? For by their immodest dress into how many young hearts, into how many innocent bosoms do they strike a poignard, or cast their poisoned darts? St. Cyprian, l. de disciplina & habitu virginum.

"You call yourself a virgin; but your dress and your studied ornaments prove the contrary. She is certainly not a christian virgin, whose study it is to excite carnal love." Ibid.

"Those costly ornaments and affected dress, those lures of beauty denote a prostitute, not a modest woman. In general the best dressed women are not the most chaste. What a madness is it to trifle with whatever was and ever will be fatal? You have seen others fall; how can you flatter yourself that you shall escape?" Ibid.

"You are at the devil's gate, you are a deserter from the flock of Christ. You ruined those, whom the devil dared not to attack. You have seduced man the image of his God. Such are the effects of your meretricious attire." Tertullian, l. de cultu feminarum, c. 1.

"A young man having conceived a violent love for a woman he had accidentally seen, was determined at any rate to enjoy her. She refused to listen to his solicitations, alleging that nothing should prevail upon her to violate that chastity, which she had consecrated to Jesus Christ. But hearing that her resistance had put him into a violent rage, and endangered his life, she had recourse to the following stratagem. She cut off her hair, and having besmeared her face with mud, sent for him, and addressed him thus: Canst thou be in love with this loathsome figure? This had such an effect upon him, that returning to his better senses he renounced his lustful pur-

pose, and became an eminent pattern of chastity. St. Isidorus Pelusiota, ep. 55, l. 2, Bibl. Patr. t. 4, p. 528.

"A lady of high rank, married to Hymentius the uncle of the virgin Eustochium, was prevailed upon to dress her hair, and put on her richest attire to conquer the virgin's virtue and the mother's care. When behold that very night she was visited by an angel, threatening in angry terms; Hadst thou the impudence to prefer thy husband's desire to the law of Christ? Were thy sacrilegious hands employed to lay snares for the virgin? Those hands shall now wither, and thou shalt be taught by excruciating torments the heniousness of thy crime. Five months were scarcely elapsed when she made a miserable end, and sunk into hell-flames." St. Jerom, l. 2. ep. 7.

7. Persons guilty of this crime usually say for their excuse, that it is the business of others to guard against their own hearts, and take heed to themselves. But do not the laws of justice and charity condemn those, who lay a stumbling-block in their way? St. Paul reproaches those, who by eating what was certainly lawful scandalized the weak, as guilty of their spiritual murder. "Lead not to perdition a man, for whom Christ died." Rom. x. 19, Destroy not the work of God, and the work of Christ's redemption, to content your appetite. How much more intolerable is it to destroy souls for the most idle and criminal vanity? Such persons sufficiently condemn their own intention, when they are forced to own, that they dress in order to please others. For how can they fix the limits of how far they shall please? God will one day judge and revénge the loss of others souls by such scandals, and the crime, of this intolerable vanity. "The Lord said; Because the daughters of Sion are haughty, and have walked with stretched out necks, and wanton glances of their eyes; the Lord will make bald the crown of the head of the daughters of Sion, will take away the ornaments of shoes, and little moons, and chains, and necklaces and bracelets, and bonnets, and bodkins, and ornaments of the legs, and sweet-balls, and ear-rings, and rings, and jewels hanging on the forehead; and changes of apparel, and short cloaks; and fine linen, and crisping-pins, and looking-glasses, and lawns, and head-bands, and fine veils. And instead of a sweet smell there shall be a stench, and instead of a girdle a cord, and instead of curled hair baldness, and instead of a stomacher hair-cloth. Thy fairest men also shall fall by the sword, and thy valiant ones in battle. And her gates shall lament and mourn, and she shall sit desolate on the ground." Isa. iii. 16—26. Almighty God, here by his prophet reckoning up the superfluous vanity of apparel used by the youth, denounces in punishment thereof speedy death, stench, baldness, maggots, wars, and the desolation of their country. St. Chrysostom writes upon that passage: "By all these things, by the eyes, by the garments, by the feet, by the gait, the chastity or wantonness of the soul betray themselves. Drunk with the passion of lust, and like mad-men, they have left nothing untried or undefiled; but have extended their brutal passion to their very dress, and to their carriage. But if these crimes were so severely reproached and punished before the law of grace, what must they expect, who are now called to heaven, to more noble triumphs, and to the imitation of the angels, and who received greater succours to overcome this base crime. As our honours are greater, so also will our chastisements be; far greater than those of Sodom and Gomorrha; and the more grievous

because they are totally reserved for the world to come." in Isai. c. 3, p. 44, 45, 46, t. 6, ed. Mountfaucon. We testify a respect to others, with whom we converse, by using clothes decent and neat; but must remember, that they are to cover our nakedness, the remnant of sin. This reflection ought to make us use them with confusion, remembering the miseries of our condition and fall, and with that simplicity which suits a penitential state; far from making dress the lure of sin.

Divines condemn as guilty of mortal sins, young women that go with their breasts bare, and necks all naked, or covered so slightly that they only invite bolder glances, and wound hearts more dangerously. Of such light handkerchiefs or coverings St. Jerom writes, "that by them the body is clothed to be made more naked." ep. ad Lætam: "Behold a woman dressed out in all her finery to entrap souls." Prov. vii. 10.

8. If such be the custom of any country, St. Antoninus writes of it: "Such a fashion is shameful, and immodest, and must not be followed." 2 part. tit. 4, cap. 5, s. 3. And divines say, that, as long as women have lived in such a custom, so long have they lived in a habit of mortal sin, and are bound to repeat their confessions. See Collet, p. 301.

Eadmer writes, (l. 1, historiæ novorum,) that when St. Anselm came into England, being called to govern the metropolitan see of Canterbury, the young noblemen of the court were accustomed to perfume and deck their hair in a very effeminate manner. Wherefore, on Ash-Wednesday, he preached a sermon against such an abuse, and put a great number, who addressed themselves to him as penitents for the fact, under a course of public penance, having first with his own hand cut and spoiled their curled locks. Those who refused to renounce that infamous effeminacy, he would not admit to the ashes, and forbad them to be admitted to absolution or the sacraments. He condemned that custom in a council of all England at London, can. 23. St. Charles Borromeo, in the visitation of his diocess, seeing a lady in a certain village immodestly dressed out, after severely rebuking her, said: "O unhappy woman; you think of setting yourself off by your dress, who will not live to see to-morrow morning in this world." The next morning she was found dead in her bed.

To paint the face is, according to divines, ordinarily a mortal sin, unless it be excused by being so little as not to be of much consequence; because, either by an express intention, or at least interpretatively, it spreads a snare to others chastity, and is always a lie in contempt of the Creator. "They offer violence to their Creator, who think they can improve his work, forgetting that we came into the world from the hands of God, which none but the devil would presume to change." St. Cyprian, l. de habitu virginum. "They offend God who are not satisfied with his work." Tertul. l. de cultu fœminarum. See St. Gregory Naz. or. adv. mulieres sese ornantes, p. 889, & Carm. de se, p. 285. St. Ambrose, l. 1, de virgin. t. 5, p, 582.

9. Kisses, touches of the hand, and the like liberties may be innocent, if done out of civility according to the custom of the country, and without danger of any impure delight; but the least mixture of impurity, or the immediate danger thereof renders them lustful and grievous sins. A certain organical pleasure, such as is found in touching the skin of infants, arising merely from the conformity of the sense of touch with the smoothness of the object, may be exempt from sin. But kisses or similar actions, which are not salutations of civility, or the like, are always faulty, and

extremely dangerous; and among adult young persons, at least if frequent, or long continued, always mortal sins. Athenagoras, a primitive learned father, in his "Apology of the Christian Religion," tells the pagans, p. 37. "Among us to look lasciviously upon a woman is a crime like adultery; nor are salutes to be communicated by a kiss, unless a pious salutation of courtesy or token of respect; which, if it be in the least defiled by any impure thought, alienates a man from eternal life." A chaste person is bound to keep the most strict watch over all his senses, so as to be irreproachable in the least thing; the least liberty taken by any one with him raises a horror in his soul, and he flies where there is the least appearance of any enemy. Salutes, or even touches of the hands, unless excused by necessity, often proceed from wantonness; in which case they are evidently mortal sins; if that be not their corrupt source, they tend at least exceedingly to inflame it. St. Basil compares them to red hot iron, the touch of which cannot but raise blisters in the flesh; such do these liberties leave in the soul. Purity is the flower of virtues, the beauty of souls, and the ornament of bodies; but then it is a delicate and tender flower; the least sun scorches it, the least wind destroys it. These levities in behaviour, these indecent familiarities, and in women this desire to please, to be flattered, and adored, are called by St. Jerom[a] "signs of expiring virginity." Such persons may boast, that they triumph over adultery, or escape the utmost excess; but in the mean time, by these criminal liberties they fall daily a prey to hell, and give reason to fear that they would go farther, did not worldly honour, not virtue, restrain them. Gerson says of salutes and touches of the hand, l. de. confess. mollitiei, p. 454, t. 2 "They are hot embers, which the devil will soon blow up into a dreadfu conflagration."

10. In these things we are to distinguish persons, who are of a timorous and scrupulous conscience in this point, and worldly persons. The former are to be ordered to despise things, which displease them, and which necessity occasions; nor are they too scrupulously to omit good, or even indifferent but honourable actions, on account of their excessive fears; because this fear is the cause of their temptations on such occasions, and they are best overcome by not regarding it, as St. Antonius observes.

But in actions really dangerous. and always in the case of worldly persons, the rule is, that all persons do study to lean the scale against themselves in every doubt or deliberation; for so great is the blindness of self-love, and so violent is the sympathy of the will with the sensitive appetite, that iniquity easily lies to itself, and deceives the heart. We are to remember that purity is a virtue, which may be lost by any of the senses of the body, or faculties of the soul; wherefore our watchfulness must be universal. "Let your eyes, your tongue, your ears be chaste, for they are all apt to lead you astray." St. Greg. Naz. Carm. ad virgines, p. 798. "Be assured that there is nothing light, nothing trifling in vice. Resist manfully the first attacks, if you wish to secure yourself from the most fatal impressions." Ib. p. 809.

It would be a rash and scandalous assertion among Catholic divines, should any one advance that the least deliberate act in impurity is not a mortal sin. "In impurity," says the great William of Paris, "nothing is light, nothing is venial." Those then, who count the liberties of which we

[a] Morituræ virginitatis indicia.

are speaking as trifles, evidently deceive themselves. Whosoever desire to preserve their chastity free from stain, must study to converse with others, especially of the other sex, as if they were angels, or without bodies, with the utmost modesty and watchfulness over all their senses. A certain virtuous lady used to say, that she learned by experience how dangerous and vicious the free conversation of persons of different sexes is, from this circumstance, that, whenever any young man had begun to converse with her, she found that she could almost persuade him any thing, or gain any thing from him.

11. I must also add, that the law of chastity obliges all young persons to shun all frequent interviews or private familiarities with persons of another sex. "Woman robs man of his precious soul." Prov. vi. 26. "Can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not be burnt? or can he walk on hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" Ib. v. 27, 28. "I find woman to be worse than death; she is the huntsman's noose, her heart is a net, her hands are fetters; the man who loves God will avoid her." Eccles. vii. 27. A woman's charms are so many imperceptible chains, which bind the heart; her eyes are like the basilisk, which kills by its looks. See Prov. xxii. 14. Her touches are more dangerous than the most venomous serpent. Joseph left his torn garment in the hand sof his impudent mistress rather than suffer her to touch him. St. Jerom says, he fled as at the bite of a ravenous wild beast, and glad to leave behind him the part of the garment, which she had touched, lest the poison should diffuse itself. L. 1, adv. Helvid. "Her conversation burns like a fire." Eccl. ix. 11. "Avoid the company of a woman, who is not thy wife." V. 12.

12. The fathers repeat often this lesson, and in the strongest terms: "Fly as much as possible the conversation of women. If necessity compel you sometimes to it, hold your eyes cast down on the ground; and, when you have spoken as little as may be required, immediately fly away." St. Isidore of Pelusium, b. 2, ep. 284. None have more to fear in this point than those who rely and presume the most confidently on their own resolutions and strength. "Do you think yourselves insensible to female attractions? What then prevents your being in heaven? To such the apostle addresses himself; 1 Cor. iv. 'You are now satisfied, you are become rich, you reign without us, at least I wish you may.' This is a state of probation, and woman scatters death around her. To her many owe their ruin. In spite of their confessions, their victories, and even their miracles, they have fatally perished by trusting themselves in this frail bark. How many lions have been tamed by weak delicate women?" Auctor libri de singularitate clericorum, inter op. St. Cypriani.

"To live always with a woman, and not to sin by the woman is something greater than to raise a dead person to life. You cannot do that, which is less, and how would you have me to do that, which is greater?" St. Bern. Serm. 65, in Cant. n. 4. "Trust not to thy former success. Thou art neither stronger than Sampson, nor more holy David, nor wiser than Solomon. Never forget that a woman banished the first man from paradise. Never be alone with a woman in private." St. Jer. ep. ad Nepotianum. We read in Genesis, xxxiv., the misfortune of Dina, who going abroad out of curiosity and complaisance, so natural to her age and sex, lost her chastity, and drew upon her whole family, and on two nations, great sorrow, infamy, and desolation, with much perfidy and bloodshed; which example the fathers frequently make use of to inculcate the obliga-

tion of young maidens keeping at home, and never being allowed to see company, or stir abroad, unless with great reserve, and under a safe guard and protection. On which account the Hebrews called a virgin Aalma, or one hidden or concealed. A contrary education, besides exposing young women to daily occasions of ruin, inspires them with a most dangerous spirit of curiosity, vanity, and wandering, fruitful in many evils during their whole lives, and contrary to virtue and the decency of their sex and condition; which the very heathen dramatists teach. See Sophocles, Ajax, p. 35, &c. St. Gregory the Great, in his dialogues, mentions a holy man named Ursinus, who with the consent of his consort had embraced an ascetic state, and entered into orders; when he lay dying, his wife came to visit him; he no sooner saw her enter his cell, than he cried out with great vehemence, though in great agony; "Take away that stubble, or it will soon catch fire." St. Arsenius said to a Roman lady, who came to recommend herself to his prayers: "I will beg of God that I may never think of thee." B. Roger, one of the companions of St. Francis, refusing to see his own mother, said: "When a man does what in his power lies, God will do his part on his side; but if a man throw himself into the danger, especially in so dangerous and slippery a matter as this of chastity, God leaves him to his own strength, by which he will never be able long to stand his ground." B. Giles used to say to the same purpose: "Chastity is a bright and clear mirror, which is tarnished with the least breath or by the sight." The lives of the saints are full of such maxims and examples. Nor did any one ever preserve his chastity, who departed from them. Those saints long practised in the school of virtue, strengthened by the most perfect habits, dead to themselves and to their senses by the most mortified lives, found these excessive precautions necessary not to awaken their domestic enemy; yet men, who have none of these helps, cannot be made sensible of their own weakness. St. Chrysostom, ironically confounding such presumptuous persons, says: "Those strong men who converse familiarly with women, and yet find no danger, I must indeed call happy. I could wish for the gift of their strength." L. contra subintroductas, t. 1, p. 231. "You tell me that, though I see you frequently converse with a virgin, I am to look upon it as an affair of piety, not of concupiscence. O admirable man! that is the condition of those, who live among stones, not with men." Ib. p. 235, t. 1, ed. Ben.

13. Some pretend that such a liberty is to be allowed between young persons before marriage. But those, who visit different females, or the same without any intention of marriage, are most to blame, because such familiarities and private interviews, being contrary to the rules of decency, good manners, and religion, justly give scandal to others. It is in this circumstance that impudence shows, how far the true maxims of virtue are banished out of the world. Some young persons openly call such liberties the privilege of their age, and even glory in them. The reign of vice must be strangely triumphant indeed, when it has banished the most fundamental laws of modesty, and removed the last fence of virtue. Nature has given man a sense of the shame and infamy, which attends every indulgence of this base passion; this he expresses by concealing and disguising from the world even in its most lawful use, as St. Austin observes. But this barrier is broken down by the impudent conduct of youth in this point, in open defiance to modesty, religion, and the respect which is due to mankind. They pretend to cloak the crime under some soft name or other;

but themselves alone do they deceive; no other person is taken by the lure. The passion is too glaring for men to be imposed upon. Let themselves be but judges in the case of others. Would not they condemn loudly similar liberties in persons, who have embraced a state of continency? But is not chastity a virtue, which all men are bound to practise, though some to the general obligation have added that of a vow to render it perpetual? Again, what married woman would be allowed such private interviews and company-keeping? Would not these very persons be the first to censure so intolerable a conduct as infamous, scandalous, and criminal? Why? if it be not in itself dangerous and sinful. If you desire the benediction of God on your marriage, approach it with such purity that you may be able to say with Sarah: "I have kept my heart clean from every stain." Tob. vi.

14. This continued familiarity between young persons of different sexes necessarily produces a sensual and fond love. We may distinguish four kinds of love; viz., the spiritual, the natural, the sensual, and the carnal. That love of our neighbour, which is spiritual, holy, and christian, is a gift of God, an effect of divine charity, and a flame of that divine fire, which the Holy Ghost kindles in our hearts, which makes us love a person purely in God, and for God, (i. e.) with the simple view of our salvation, and of the honour of God. In this charity there is a special love of friendship, which divine charity forms, and which is a mutual spiritual succour of virtue, a comfort, and an egregious fruit of charity. Christ himself showed this to be holy, and sanctified it by his divine friendship with St. John the Evangelist, and the rest of his apostles. The love, which we call natural, is engrafted in us by nature towards our parents, friends, benefactors, and all mankind, especially those in whom we see particular amiable qualities, or a sympathy with our temper, manners, and inclinations. This love in itself is rational and good, so long as it keeps within the bounds, which reason and the law of God prescribe to it; but imperfect, unless it be ennobled, purified, and sanctified by the motives of supernatural charity, and the intentions of piety and grace. The sensual love is that, which seeks the gratification of the senses; in which if it rest alone, even in a married state, it is sinful, and perverts the order established by God, making its own satisfaction its only and base motive. Carnal love is criminal, tending to, or seeking the unlawful gratification of the senses. So quick are the senses to catch a flame, and so close is their connection with the powers of the soul, that even the most holy and spiritual love of our neighbour must be carefully governed, and restrained from occasions, by which it would easily be corrupted, and degenerate into that which is carnal. The natural and far more the sensual love are infinitely dangerous on the same account, unless raised to the perfection of true charity by its more noble motives, and unless all the occasions, by which it may be corrupted, be carefully avoided. Gerson, (l. de distinctione visionum, t. 1, p. 56,) says: "Nothing is more subtle or dangerous than personal affections, which insensibly become carnal;" if encouraged by private conversations, &c.

15. The evil is the greater, because even carnal love, so long as it avoids what is entirely gross, flatters and disguises itself under the name of a holy and christian love. Persons say they love others for their virtues; it is true, nothing is more just than that virtue should challenge the tribute of our praise and affection.

But then the manner, in which we love, is also to be holy, spiritual, and like that of the angels. If the concupiscense of the sensual part of the

soul creeps into the affection, it is perverted and becomes criminal and a dangerous source of many sins. No one loves another unless he sees, or imagine that he sees in said person amiable qualities and virtues. Nay such is the fascination of sensual love, that a person enslaved by it fancies every virtue and charm in the beloved object, and brightens even faults into perfections. Wherefore the perfections of the object no way excuse what is inordinate in it. Let us consider the marks, by which a love is known to be already what we call a carnal and vicious love. They are thus described by St. Bonaventure, l. 2, de profectu religiosorum, c. 28.

The first mark is, if a person find a particular pleasure in conversing with another on idle subjects, spend with pleasure, or desire to spend hours with him in such trifling discourse, is torn from him with violence and repugnance; for nothing could make such a converse agreeable, or even tolerable, were it not a secret sensual satisfaction, which is found in it.

A second mark is, if the person talk in such conversation about vain, frivolous, and unprofitable things; especially if with assurances of his affection, of the fidelity and constancy of his love, and the like idle impertinences. To all such endearments, frequent little idle presents, tender letters, and the like things, which are intended to keep up a flame, holy love is a stranger. "To frequent presents, ribbands, caps, delicacies, and tender letters." St. Jerom, ep. ad. Nepotian.

A third sign is a licentious freedom in actions, gestures, stolen glances, flattering words, and whatsoever transport of inordinate love. Spiritual love is reserved and modest in all its gestures, looks, and words; and converses among men with the purity of angels.

A fourth sign is disquietude, uneasiness, and disturbance of mind in the other's absence; impatience to see him; a continual remembrance of him; (i. e.) if filling one's mind with his remembrance, perpetually entertaining it upon him, passionately desiring news about him, asking often and earnestly of him, and the like; if he run in the mind, even at prayers and on all occasions. Such symptoms betray a mind disturbed, and a heart agitated with the waves of an irregular passion of love. Spiritual love thinks of another with tranquillity; remembers him at prayer only to pray for him; feels no emotion but such as are moderate and calm.

A fifth mark is a jealousy, which suffers no rival or partner, but is moved to indignation if the person beloved seem to speak to, or salute another more kindly, or to bear to any other a greater affection; it even turns its aversion against that person, who shares the regard of the beloved, speaks against him, and shows on every occasion an antipathy and prepossession. On the contrary, spiritual love rejoices to see all others loved with ourselves; it extends itself to many, and increases as it is multiplied, as fire is more kindled the more fuel is thrown upon it.

The sixth mark is, that a person has his eyes shut to the faults and imperfections of the other, excuses those which can admit no excuse, and discovers a blindness in his favour; spiritual love excuses what charity directs to be excused, but condemns and seeks to correct all real faults.

16. The excessive dangers and the complicated evil and malice of these fond affections are greater than can be summed up in words. First, it is inconceivable what suspicions, talk, and insinuations they produce in a neighbourhood; often quarrels, detractions, slanders, jealousies, &c. Secondly, being sensual they seek to indulge and gratify themselves in pleasing the senses, and by inflaming the evil desires of the heart set no

bounds to them, and entirely stifle and silence reason. Thirdly, they leave the most dangerous and criminal impressions on the imagination, fill the mind with evil ideas, and the heart with the most violent bad affections and inclinations.

These fondnesses are the more dangerous, because they arise from small sparks, and make their progress imperceptibly till the whole soul is in a flame. This friendship in its commencement is no more than a just esteem of a person perhaps, truly valuable and amiable, and an esteem founded on his modesty, prudence, virtue, and other qualifications. In this they apprehend no danger, see no harm; but it is the greater, because secret and unperceived. On which account all the fathers and all the prudent directors of souls are extremely severe and peremptory in warning against the beginnings of this evil. But persons here deceive themselves, counting upon their good intentions, their firm resolutions, their irreproachable conduct. In this presumption they seek one another's company, and hold long conversations together, and think themselves safe because they most cautiously shun any glances, or whatever is unbecoming in their behaviour. But this mutual confidence, this indulgence strengthens the passion, and they are not sensible how deeply they are wounded, how fast down they are bound, until they begin to attempt a separation. When they find how much this costs, they cry out, that they never imagined their heart was gone so far. But, when they find themselves assaulted by fouler ideas, they still blind themselves, and say that, as they carefully resist them, there is no sin. But can those be excused, who wilfully put the occasions, and who, though advertised of the danger, yet despise it? They listen not to the oracle: "He that loves danger shall perish in it." Had they a sincere an effectual resolution, they would instantly pluck out an eye, cut off a hand, rather than play with a serpent. While they neglect this, their resolution is that half-will of St. Austin before his conversion, when he prayed to be disengaged from his sinful affections, yet seemed afraid in his heart lest God should hear him. Ah! the beginnings of all sensible and tender attachments are to be cut off; they are most pernicious and dangerous even to the most mortified and the most perfect. The fire is kindled, and, though hid, yet very violent. The best intentions are no excuse. The angel of Satan here transforms himself easily into an angel of light.

17. A learned bishop, in a work printed among those of St. Thomas of Aquin, (opusc. 64, l. de modo confitendi,) writes thus on this subject: "This cruel disturbance of the mind prevents its application to prayer, which purifies, enlightens, enlivens, strengthens, and invigorates; whereas carnal love depresses the spirits, clouds, sinks, and weakens the soul. The body feels the effects of this impression. Though carnal affection be always dangerous, it is particularly fatal to spiritual persons, especially when settled on a person of apparent virtue. For the motive seems to be unexceptionable; still a frequent intercourse produces private danger and real evil. As this affection increases, the original motive is weakened, and the parties fall. This is not perceived at first; but experience will soon convince them, that instead of angels, as they first appeared, they are become mere mortals. Their conversation is loose and tender, their devotion disappears, they are impatient of a separation, they adore each other's personal advantages, and their pious friendship degenerates into carnal love. The late hour, the call of duty are forgotten, and it is with

difficulty that they consent to part. What they feel on these occasions should convince them, that their connections are merely carnal, and very different from spiritual love. It is a saying of St. Jerom: Tarry not under the same roof with a woman; trust not to thy former success; for thou art neither as strong as Sampson nor as wise as Solomon. If you tell me that your flesh is crucified, I answer that the devil is still alive, and that his breath will soon blow up the smothered embers into a flame. Again St. Augustin says: let thy discourse with women be short and guarded. They are not the less dangerous because they are pious. Their virtues only render them more amiable, and their smooth tongue will carry the poison of lust to thy heart. Believe me, I am a bishop, and I am talking to a bishop, whom I should be ashamed to deceive. I have found by long experience, that the lofty cedars of Lebanon, that the saints of the desart could not stand this trial, though I never had the smallest reason to question the sincerity of their intentions, nor should have hesitated to compare them to a Jerom or an Ambrose. Hear St. Bernard: you are fond of the company of women, and do you think I can account you chaste? But I will suppose it; at least you excite suspicion, and are guilty of the sin of scandal." p. 105, t. 18, op. St. Thomæ.

18. St. Francis of Sales writes against the pretence of those, who flatter themselves that they will restrain fond affections from what is criminal, and therefore think they are to be indulged within certain bounds. "But you will say, I will entertain some of this love, not all. Alas! you deceive yourself; this fire of love is more active and piercing than you imagine. You calculate upon receiving but a spark; and you will wonder to see, that in a moment it will have possessed your whole heart, reduced all your resolution to ashes, and your reputation to smoke. The Wise man crieth out: 'Who will have compassion on an enchanter stung by a serpent?' And I cry after him: Fools and madmen, do you think to charm love, so as to be able to manage it at pleasure? You would play with it, but it will bite and sting you cruelly." Introduction, part 3, c. 18, 19. "Cry aloud to every one fallen into the snares of wanton love; cut, break, and tear them; stand not dallying to rip up these foolish amities; they must be torn; untie not the knots, but break and cut them. We must not be favourable to a love so contrary to the love of God." c. 21.

19. Some persons may think me too severe in these articles. To this what other answer can I give but to cry out with tears in the words of the great St. Austin: "The most shameful transgressions, the most atrocious crimes, if suffered to grow into habits, soon lose their deformity, and become familiar. They are no longer concealed, but are held out to the practise of others." Enchir. c. 80, t. 6, ed. Ben. p. 227. And in another place; "Wretched is the condition of men, whom none but uncommon crimes alarm. The sins we see daily committed, cost the blood of the Son of God; they shut the gates of heaven against us, and still they make but a slight impression on us." In Gal. iv. 11, t. 3, part 2, ed. Ben.

That father preaching on the strict purity, which God required of all persons, whether in the state of virginity, widowhood, or marriage, says, that some, who found themselves guilty, were offended at his severity, and angry with him, to whom he answers; that God would demand an account for their sins of him, no less than of them, should he be silent: and that such a silence, by which he should betray his trust could not save or spare them; that he therefore said to God: "I have preached, that you

may spare them; do you convert them. Make the libertine chaste, that we may rejoice when we stand before thy judgment seat." Then addressing himself to his people, he said: "Libertines, repent while ye are suffered to live. I may preach to you, but, if I preach in vain, it will not be in my power to acquit you on the last day, or to prevent your eternal damnation." Serm. 132, olim 47, de verbis Domini, t. 5, ed. Ben. p. 637.

DISCOURSE LVIII.

ON THE REMEDIES AGAINST IMPURITY.

1. PURITY is a virtue, which makes the soul of a man living on the earth a true heaven, because God, who delights in chaste minds, chooses his dwelling in them. This is the ivory throne of the true Solomon, Jesus Christ, the flowery bed of the divine spouse, and the garden planted with fair lilies, amidst which he is delighted to feed. It is a beautiful rose, surrounded indeed by thorns, but which with its sweet scent embalms both heaven and earth. Purity drew down the divine Word from the bosom of the Father, in which he had rested from eternity, into the womb of Mary by his incarnation, and it daily draws him down into chaste souls by his singular graces. On the other hand, it raises corruptible creatures, above what they are by nature, to the dignity of angels, places them near the throne of God, and possesses in heaven the privilege of following the Lamb wherever he goes, and of singing a new song unknown to the rest of the blessed. The highest crown due to this virtue is indeed reserved to its most perfect state, that of an unspotted virginity; but the glory of perfect virginity is forfeited by one single deliberate sin committed against it either in body or mind. "True christian virginity must be immaculate in thought and unsullied by lust." St. Jerom, l. 1, in Jovinian. "Virginity is a perfect and holy integrity." St. Tho. 5, 2æ. q. 152, a. 1. Wherefore, St. Austin conjures all virgins to preserve a virtue, which, if lost, can never be retrieved in its utmost perfection: "Be careful, while you may, not to forfeit the gift of virginity; for it can never be recovered." l. de virginitate, c. 29, p 355. But every degree of purity, in every state and condition, has its excellence and its merit; and it every where has its dangers and its combats. It therefore, behoves every one to instruct himself in the means, by which it is to be obtained, and to put on the arms, by which its victories are to be gained.

2. Humility is laid down by the fathers as the first, and of all others the most necessary means of obtaining and securing to ourselves this treasure of purity. Without humility the most perfect chastity would be vicious, and only the game of pride. Whence St. Paul says: "Let him, that glories, glory in the Lord." And the fathers never cease to recommend to virgins, above all things, the most sincere humility, without which virginity itself becomes vicious. "We admire virginity," says the ancient council of Gangres, held soon after the council of Nice, "but if it be accompanied with humility." Conc. t. 2, p. 423.

Pride not only robs chastity of its merit, but generally also makes it a prey to impurity. For though these two passions are entirely different in

their nature, the one being a spiritual sin, the other carnal, yet, the former commonly brings on the latter, and they are generally attendants one on the other. The devil having gained a soul by pride easily strengthens his empire, by fetteringher in the chains of lust. Hence, we see, that persons, who were before most chaste, no sooner fall from virtue by pride, than they find a furious passion of impurity beginning to annoy and make them its prey. One would think, that pride should inspire men with a great abhorrence of this base passion, and that so foul a passion could not but keep the unchaste in sentiments of humility; yet, strange as it is, pride and impurity go usually hand in hand together. The reason is, that God, whose gift true purity is, withdraws his grace from the proud; whence they easily fall into the snares of this domestic enemy. Thus does God often punish pride by this shameful sin. St. Paul shows this in the ancient heathen philosophers. We read that many of them, who delivered excellent precepts of morality, and pretended to virtue, being puffed up with pride, fell from its rules in the practice, defiled and dishonoured themselves by the most shameful and unnatural lusts. Plato and others, the most famed amongst them for their morals, are said to have had their catamites. "Professing themselves to be wise they became fools; God gave them up to the desire of their heart, to uncleanness, to dishonour their own bodies among themselves. For this cause, God delivered them up to shameful passions, receiving in themselves the recompense, which was due to their error." Rom. i. 22, 26. Experience daily convinces us of the truth of this observation. Souls, that glory in their pretended virtue, suddenly find this most ignominious passion flying in their faces. Whence the fathers and masters of a spiritual life lay down the most perfect humility as the first and most essential means of obtaining and preserving the virtue of chastity. "If a virgin glory, she has perished," says St. Ambrose. l. de virgin.

Labour against lust not only by bodily penance, but by prayer and spiritual virtues. Though thou fast, watch, and scourge thyself, thou shalt never possess cleanness and chastity without the gift of God. Without the grace of Jesus and true humility, thou wilt sooner kill thyself than kill carnal motions of lust either in mind or body, says our devout countryman Hilton. Whence St. Austin, labouring to obtain chastity, asked in order thereto the virtue of humility. "Grant me thy grace, O Lord, which by giving me a sense of my weakness will make me strong."

3. Humility is the mother of prayer. By filling us with a feeling sense of our entire unworthiness, nothingness, weakness, and essential dependence on God, it powerfully excites us most earnestly and assiduously to beg his holy grace. God is the author of every good gift; and prayer is the ordinary means, the channel by which his greatest graces are communicated to us. By this we are chiefly to obtain his supernatural strength against our spiritual enemies, and to arrive at the riches of virtue. This is more especially true of those virtues, which necessarily require a special grace, being above the power of nature; as this of purity; of which the Wise man says: "I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, and this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was." Wisd. viii. 21. Which St. Austin and other fathers understand principally of the virtue of chastity. "It is granted by God to those who seek it, who pray for it, who labour to obtain it." St. Jerom, l. 3, in Mat.

19. Whence St. Austin said of himself, when under the tyranny of impurity before his conversion; "Thou wouldst grant me continency, if I sincerely applied for it." Conf. l. 6, c. 11. In this humility he placed his whole confidence in the divine mercy, and never ceased earnestly to implore it; "My only hope is in thy great mercy. O love, ever alive, ever warm, O my God, inflame my heart.[a] Thou commandest me to be chaste; grant what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt." Conf. l. 10, c. 19, n. 40. Every one is bound to pray for grace against this and all other vices. "As a city, which is not fenced with strong walls, easily falls into the power of enemies, because, it has no means to repel them; so, a soul, which is not strengthened by prayer, is easily made a prey by the devil. Prayer is her force against him;" says St. Chrysostom, l. de orando Deum. But those, who find their domestic enemy more troublesome, must redouble their prayers and tears night and day against him. "If any of you should be assaulted by filthy thoughts," says St. Ephrem, "let him not fall into sloth, or abandon himself to despair; but let him pour forth his heart in the sight of God, and cry out incessantly with sighs and tears: Arise, O Lord, and defend me according to thy justice. I am the work of thy hands; withdraw not from me thy strength. Why dost thou turn away thy face? Why dost thou forget my poverty and weakness? because my enemy with fury pursues my soul to devour it." l. 2, de compunctione, c. 2. Let him thus cry out to God as often as he prostrates himself before him in holy prayer; and in all sudden temptations, in the time of battle.

4. Self-denial and a spirit of docility, obedience, and humility must subdue the mind by inward mortification; but the flesh is also to be tamed by fasting and abstinence. Of purity we are to understand that oracle of truth; "It is not found in the land of those, that live daintily." Job xxvi. 13. "Plants grow luxuriant on the banks of rivers, and the seeds of lust are rendered productive by the conversation of women. The man who denies nothing to his appetite, and proposes to lead a chaste life, is like him, who should attempt to stop the raging flames with a bridle. As the fire fed by dry wood cannot be kept under, so neither can lust be subdued while the body is pampered." St. Nilus, or. 2, de luxuria, Bibl. patr. t. 4, p. 970. Intemperance and gluttony are the soil, in which beastly lust grows and triumphs, as in Sodom; "This was the sin of Sodom; they were proud, intemperate, and slothful; and they were guilty of every abomination." Ezech. xvi. God has appointed this mortification of the senses to be the means, by which the rebellion of the flesh is to be resisted, and this enemy kept in subjection. Even St. Paul, "I chastise my body," &c. 1 Cor. ix. 7. Hence it is a maxim of all directors in a spiritual life, that it is impossible to preserve the virtue of chastity without a penitential and austere life. St. Francis of Assisium used to say, that, as flesh is salted to be preserved from corruption, so is our body to be preserved from the stain of filthy lust by mortification; which he proved by the example of John the Baptist, though he was sanctified in his mother's womb, and strengthened in habits of innocence and virtue from his infancy. St. Chrysostom writes, "A crucified life is the root of chastity;" l. 1, de virginit. c. 7. Chastity

[a] Tota spes mea non nisi in magna misericordia tua. O amor qui semper ardes, & nunquam extingueris, charitas, Deus meus, accende me. Continentiam jubes; da quod jubes, & jube, quod vis.

is likened in holy scripture to a rose, not only on account of its beauty, and fragrancy, but likewise because it groweth among sharp prickles; for chastity never groweth or flourisheth long but in austerity of life and mortification of the flesh. It is always in danger among pleasures and delights of the flesh. It dieth unless it be maintained by fasting and temperance. It is as great a miracle to live chaste without abstinence, as it is to raise a dead man to life, as a great man writes Wine, says St. Jerom, is to youth a poison, (i. e.) if drunk pure or plentifully. "Wine is a luxurious beverage." Prov. xx. "Be not drunk with wine, in which is luxury." Ephes. v. 18.

5. Sloth is likewise reckoned by Ezechiel among the greatest resources of this sin in Sodom; c. xvi. Idleness is the mother of all vices, and the destruction of all virtues. God enjoined to all men to labour; (Gen. iii. 44,) for his words contain not a bare counsel, but a precept, as Calmet shows. Whence St. Jerom in his epistles to ladies of quality often repeats to them this lesson, and exhorts them never, except when employed in duties, to let go the loom or the wheel, adding that thus the days will seem short, and that no alms to the poor would be a more agreeable sacrifice to Christ than clothes or other necessaries wrought by their own hands. Among the ancient hermits it was an essential rule, that they should all be constantly employed, and each had his task, of some penitential laborious work, as we see in their history, and in St. Austin's book de opere monachorum. Cassian mentions that abbot Paul, who lived at so great a distance in the desarts, that he could not send his work for sale, rigorously exacted of himself a daily task, and at the end of the year burned all his work and the palm-tree leaves, which he had gathered for it. Instit. l. 10, c. 24. All monks, who did not follow bodily labour, were always bound assiduously to employ themselves in copying books, or in preaching and other spiritual functions; and this not only out of charity, but to satisfy the divine precept of labouring, and to avoid sloth, the source of all spiritual evils, especially of impurity. This the heathen poets understood:

"Call for your book and lamp before 'tis light,
And study both to know and do what's right:
Envy or lust will else torment your breast,
And you will seek your couch in vain for rest."[a]
Hor. ep. l. 1.

"Bar idleness, you ruin Cupid's game,
You blunt his arrows, and you quench his flame.
The slothful he seeks out, and makes his prize,
Surely as he the man of bus'ness flies;
The' adulterous lust that did Ægysthus seize,
And brought on murder, sprang from wanton ease."[b]
Ovid de Remed. Amoris.

No sloth is more dangerous than that of excess in sleeping, or lying late in bed, especially awake. To rise early in the morning is a habit indis-

[a] Si non ante diem poscas librum cum lumine, si non
Intendes animum studiis & rebus honestis,
Invidia vel amore vigil torquebere.
[b] Otia si tollas, periere Cupidinis arcus,
Contemptæque jacent & sine luce faces.
Quæritur Ægysthus quare sit factus adulter?
In promptu causa est; desidiosus erat.

pensably requisite to overcome this enemy. Gerson admonishes against this temptation, that persons never lie awake in bed one moment in the morning, but instantly arise with prayer, and that awaking in the night they pray.

6. Under the temptation the first and capital lesson is, to resist with the utmost vigour and speed the first suggestion of the enemy.[a] Gerson observes, that under the temptation of this passion reason is clouded and disturbed by the movements of the sensitive appetite, so that it cannot think seriously of God or the great motives of virtue; wherefore, if a man then begin to dally or to deliberate, he is certainly overcome. Moreover, God offended at his sloth and infidelity abandons him to fall a prey. Therefore, it is most profitable to him, that he stir himself up to serious attention by the remembrance of some terrible object, which may rouse his sloth: for no man would sin under any grievous temptation, if he believed that he should be immediately punished in some dreadful manner, but would awaken and cry out in dread: What am I going to do? Gerson, Remed. contra recidivum.

The same author writes in another work: "The best of all remedies, according to the doctrine and the experience of the saints, is to resist the first appearance of temptation as we would that of a material fire. For this purpose we should have in readiness some short prayers to be said, striking the breast, punishing some part of the body, or rising hastily from bed. Imitate the example of St. Bennet, St. Anthony, St. Bernard, St. Thomas, &c. A certain young man, when tempted, spit on the ground, and as if he saw the devil himself, Avaunt, says he, thou wretched damned spirit; shall I hearken to thee, shall I offend my God, shall I pollute his temple with the filth of sin? He next addressed his fervent prayers and supplications to God, to the saints and angels. These prayers and reflections must often be repeated in a spirit of faith and humility, and with a proper sense of our frailty. 'Create a clean heart in me, O God.'" Ps. 50. "Inflame me with the fire of the Holy Ghost. O Virgin of virgins, pray for me. 'Save me, O God, because the waters have reached my soul.'" Ps. 68. Gerson, l. de confessione mollitiei, t. 2, p. 454, 455.

7. A person must take the utmost care not to lose courage under this temptation. Let it be ever so violent, by the divine grace our heart is always subject to us, we can always refuse our consent, and consequently gain a glorious victory over the enemy of our God and of our own souls. "Consent not, and thy resistance shall be crowned." St. Bernard, Serm. 5, in Quadrag. t. 1, p. 822. Though you should have increased the strength of your enemy by criminal habits, yet it is always in your power to resist and conquer; as St. Chrysostom wrote to one fallen into that gulph: "I know thou art weaker in thy resistance of the evil spirit; I know thou art sunk into the gulph of voluptuousness; but if you will say to the enemy, we despise thy pleasures, the root of all evil is removed; if thou raise thy eyes to heaven, the temptation will cease, and in the fiery furnace thou shalt find a cool refreshing breeze, and the flames shall not touch thy thoughts or thy conscience. Many a strong fortress, which no art, nor machines could force, has been treacherously surrendered by a few of its inhabitants. If thy own thoughts do not betray thee, no stratagem, no

[a] Principiis obsta; sero medicina paratur
Cum mala per longas invaluere moras.

attack of the enemy will subdue thee." L. 2, ad Theodorum lapsum, t. 1, p. 39, ed. Ben.

8. The daily meditation of the passion of Christ, and of the last things, is a sovereign antidote against this temptation. "The vain delusive pleasures of this life are but shadows and dreams. Scarcely is the sin committed when the sense of pleasure is extinguished. Short is the enjoyment, but the punishment has no end." St. Chrysost. ibid.

"If temptations assail you, if troublesome suggestions distress you, think of the heavenly treasure, that awaits you. Who would not suffer something in the defence of his property, in settling the boundaries of his estate, or in securing his fortune? If, for these trifles men expose themselves to so many dangers, how can they be indifferent to the concerns of religion? Why does their courage fail them, when an eternal crown is the object?" St. Augustin, Serm. 543, t. 5, p. 1328, ed. Ben.

Think also on the joy of the victory. "The consciousness of unsullied purity is the greatest of all pleasures; nothing can equal the satisfaction of having conquered lust, nor can a more complete victory be obtained than that over corrupt appetites. The man, who conquers an enemy, gives a proof of superior strength to another; but he, that subdues lust, conquers himself." Auctor vetus, l. de pudicitia, inter op. St. Cypriani, p. 422.

St. Jerom (ep. 18, ad Eustochium, t. 4, ed Ben. p. 47,) says: "Sharp is the conflict, but great is the reward, to imitate the martyrs, the apostles, and Christ himself. These things will appear hard to a person, that does not love Christ." He adds, that we must always bear in mind how much Christ suffered for us. "The only suitable return is to give blood for blood, and to sacrifice our lives for him, who redeemed us by his passion. What saint was crowned without a struggle? Solomon alone passed his life in pleasures, and this circumstance perhaps, will account for his fall. Nothing is hard to those who love, nothing insupportable to a willing mind." Ibid.

Even Ovid could assure us, that the joy of the victory is exceedingly great and permanent, and costs little, if compared with the anxieties, pain, and cruel slavery of the passion.[a]

9. A person, who is molested by this enemy, may every evening going to bed, or at other times, meditate on some terrible circumstance of the last things. He may imagine a dead carcase lying in the grave, crying out to him: "Be mindful of my lot; for such also shall be thine: yesterday to me, and to-day to thee." Eccl. xxxviii. 23. Or he may represent to himself an unhappy soul buried, for some sin of impurity, in the flames of hell; he may in his imagination hold a dialogue with her, answering himself; as how much she suffers in every faculty; how long she has endured these torments, and how long she will endure the same, viz., that she will continue in them till the duration would exhaust all the sands on the shore and all the drops of the ocean, at the rate of one drop or grain at the end of every million of ages; and after all this suffering see her torments as fresh as ever, and so to be felt for all eternity; he may ask,

[a] Quod juvat exiguum: plus est quod lædit amantes:
Preponant animo multa ferenda suo.
Quot lepores in Atho, quot apes pascuntur in Hybla,
Cærula quot baccas Palladis arbor habet,
Littore quot conchæ; tot sunt in amore dolores;
Quæ patimur, multo spicula melle madent.

what her sentiments now are of all the enjoyments of this world, and of that base sin for which she suffers so much; or let him represent to himself Christ hanging upon a cross, and the bitter torments he suffered for us; and by fervent prayers beg of God to be preserved from the misfortune of losing heaven, of the flames of hell, of offending God, of trampling under foot the adorable blood of Christ. Let him make the petition of this virtue an earnest part of all his sacrifices and prayers, especially every morning and night, imploring the intercession of the blessed Virgin, his angel guardian, St. Joseph, &c. commending his heart into the hands of his crucified Saviour, and renewing his most firm purpose of never sinning more.

10. If any temptation assault him, let him vigorously repulse and resist it, not ordinarily with that external violence, which would often serve only to imprint the image deeper on the mind; but with the utmost quickness and vigour, turning the mind from the object, making a short ejaculation to Christ crucified, begging by his precious wounds and adorable blood to be preserved from the devouring enemy, and fixing the mind calmly on some object, which may divert its attention. If the mind be not occupied in something serious, let it be employed on the sufferings of Christ or the torments of the damned, or in earnest prayer. He may look on a crucifix, make the sign of the cross with his thumb on his breast, and converse in mind with his good angel, or say to himself: Job vi. "Can any one taste that, which being tasted brings death," even eternal death to the soul? or, "O Lord, I suffer; have compassion on me." He must be constantly careful not to slacken the earnestness, with which he resists the enemy, and to shun the least levity of motion in his hands or any part, that may in the least favour the temptation; which would be to give the enemy a great advantage over him. An entire vigorous resistance disarms the fury, and weakens him exceedingly. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James iv. If any titillation of involuntary pleasure arise, it is very advantageous, by biting the tongue or lip, pinching the arm sharply, leaping out of bed in the cold, or some such bodily pain, immediately to repress and extinguish it. One heroic victory sometimes so vanquishes this enemy, that he loses his strength for ever against a soul. This St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Francis, St. Wulstan, &c. have experienced. The holy and glorious king Alfred, one of the greatest princes that ever wore a crown in Europe, finding himself in his youth grievously molested with temptations of impurity, begged of God to free him from that annoyance and danger, by sending him some painful distemper. God heard his request; and the king was afflicted long with the piles in the most painful manner, and afterwards during twenty-five years with the most excruciating pains of the gravel and stone, as is related by Asserius in his life, p. 42.

11. The last means I shall mention, by which this passion is to be overcome, is the avoiding of all dangers and occasions. The capital point against all sin is to shun the occasions. Wilfully to run into an immediate occasion of a mortal sin is itself a mortal sin, because, it exposes a soul to the danger of losing God. But against impurity this law is most essential, and must be extended farther than against any other vice. In other sins we are commanded to conquer by resisting the devil; but in impurity our safety consists in flight. This the apostle expresses when he says; "Fly fornication." 1 Cor. vi. 18. The reason is, that in this

war we have a domestic enemy within ourselves, we find a concupiscence, a law in the members opposite to that of the spirit. "But the flesh is weak." Mat. xxvi. 41. "The flesh warreth against the spirit." Rom. vii. "Unhappy man, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." The flesh is always struggling against the spirit; it is a traitor within our own doors; if we suffer the enemy to approach and hold any intelligence with it, we shall never be able to defend our fortress. This concupiscence is a covered fire, which is kindled by the least occasion, and throws the heart quite into a flame. No saint was ever able to withstand this enemy but by following this rule, and precept of the Holy Ghost; witness the cases of Solomon, David, and Sampson. He who relies upon his own strength is guilty of a more unpardonable rashness than one, who should pretend naked to hold the mouth of a ravenous tiger, or to carry fire in his bosom without any dread of being burnt. "Dread the danger of so rash and groundless a presumption. You wish to find an enemy to conquer; but take care lest this prove the occasion of your ruin." St. Cæsarius, Serm. 295, in app. St. Aug. t. 5.

12. There are three sorts of occasions. First, of the exterior senses, especially of the sight and hearing. "Death enters through our windows." Jer. ix. 21. The senses are the windows of the soul. To preserve our minds from all bad thoughts, and our hearts from all evil desires, we must shut our ears to all dangerous songs and discourse, and retire from all such conversation and company. Our eyes also we must shut to every object, that might awaken this passion in our breasts. "Turn aside from a dressed woman, and consider not her beauty." Eccl. ix. David fell by the sight of a woman. Job, though a saint, could say: "I agreed with my eyes never to think of a virgin." Job iii. 1. A great man said very well, that beauty is the strongest and the weakest enemy a man has: by a single glance it conquers, and by refusing a glance it is overcome.

Idleness is the second occasion; especially if joined with solitude.[a] "Solitude inclines us to evil." Seneca. ep. 25, Solitary hours must be filled with very earnest laborious exercises of mind and body, or by fervent prayer and meditation.

A third occasion is whatever place or other object, which by former habits could renew the remembrance of the passion, especially certain sorts of company.

13. We must fly from the occasions at the first sight. If we deliberate or delay ever so little, we are in the utmost danger of being undone. God himself has given us an excellent figure of this conduct, when he sent angels to draw Lot out of the impure and infamous city of Sodom. They gave him no respite, and pressed him till he had got quite clear; they forbad him to remain in any part of the neighbourhood, and would not suffer him even to look back behind him; and never ceased to repeat: "Make haste to put thyself in a place of safety;" Gen. xix. and this though his sons-in-law and others mocked him. "He seemed to them to speak as if he were in jest." Gen. xix. 22.

We have an example how we ought to behave in the conduct of the chaste Joseph. He left even his cloak in the hands of the temptress be-

[a] Quisquis amas. loca sola nocent, loca sola caveto;
Quo fugis? in populo tutior esse potes.

cause she had touched it, and attempted to hold him by it; that he might have nothing, which could renew the remembrance of the sinful object. "It was a nice precaution, but when tempted to lust, it was a necessary one;" says St. Gregory Nazianzen. St. Chrysostom often makes use of this example of holy Joseph, admiring the courage, with which he feared not the displeasure, indignation, and revenge of his mistress, or any danger of dungeons, torments, or death; nothing could prevail on him to dally one moment with the danger; respect, complaisance, civility, obedience to a mistress, which upon other occasions obliged him to listen and reply with deference, here he forgot, because the least stay or reply would have been dangerous. His purity was assaulted; therefore an immediate and distant flight was indispensable; though it had cost him an eye, a hand, or a foot, or even his life, he owed his sacrifice to God rather than hazard his virtue by tarrying in the danger. In this flight and victory he is more admirable than the three children, who walked without hurt in the midst of the Babylonian furnace, says St. Chrysostom, Hom. 44, in Gen. t. 4, p. 455, ed. Ben. & ib. Hom. 62, p. 597, 599.

The company whether of women, or of those whose discourse easily turns upon the subject of amours, &c. is of all dangers the greatest. Ovid says, that a patient, who by obeying his prescriptions was almost cured, by once falling into such company relapsed irretrieveably.

"A patient who my orders did obey,
And to his cure was in a hopeful way,
By keeping lovers' company one night,
Relapsed beyond my skill to set him right.
Such dang'rous neighbourhood you must avoid,
A flock's by one contagious sheep destroy'd."
Remed. amoris, l. 2, *v.* 667.

"From all such places too you must remove,
As ever have been conscious to your love.
The dear rememb'rance will renew desire,
And to fresh blaze blow up the sleeping fire.
There stands the rock on which you split before,
Imagine there you hear *Charybdis* roar."
Ib. v. 822.

"But ne'er frequent the wanton theatre,
Where vain desires in all their pomp appear;
From music, dancing, and an am'rous part
Perform'd to th' life, how can you guard your heart?"
Ib. v. 33.

DISCOURSE LIX.

ON HUMILITY.

I am the voice of one crying in the desart. John i. 23.

THERE were in the old law many holy martyrs and prophets, many great saints, eminent patterns of virtue and perfection, as Abraham, Moses, Elias, and a thousand others; yet the Son of God pronounces that "among the born of women there had not been a greater than John the Baptist."

Mat. xi. 11. His life was one continued miracle. He was foretold by an angel, and received his name from heaven; he was miraculously conceived of parents far advanced in years; he was distinguished by extraordinary graces from the moment of his conception, and sanctified in his mother's womb; not yet born he knew and adored the world's Redeemer in the womb; at his birth he filled all with spiritual joy, and restored speech to his father. He retired when young into the desart, where in perpetual innocence he led an angelic life, He preached the baptism of penance, was sent to prepare the world to receive its Redeemer, to baptize him and point him out to others, whom the prophets had only foretold at a distance; so he was a prophet, and more than a prophet, a doctor, a virgin, and a martyr.

St. Peter Chrysologus, (Serm. 127,) says: "His life was the school of virtue, the mirror of chastity, the example and way of penance, the rule of true justice, and the most consummate pattern of the highest perfection and sanctity. He was greater than a man, the end of the old law, the sanction of the new, the silence of the prophets, the light of the world, the herald of the great judge, and the witness of the world's Redeemer." Now if we inquire what was the distinguishing virtue of this great saint, what principally raised him to so high a degree of perfection, and to a dignity so exalted, and drew such commendations from the mouth of the son of God above all other men; St. Austin (Serm. 288, n. 2,) answers, it was his exceeding humility, of which the gospel gives us a signal example. The Jews, seeing his miraculous life and eminent sanctity, deputed to him a solemn embassy to know, if he was not the Messias, whom according to the prophets they expected about that time. John i. St. John confessed in all humility, and denied not who he was; he confessed he was not the Christ, but tells them the Messias was amidst them, professing himself unworthy to untie the latchet of his shoes. They ask him, if he were not Elias? he answers, no: if a prophet? he says, no. The deputies urge for some answer to bring back to those that sent them: he tells them: "I am the voice of one crying in the desert;" I am no more than a voice calling to repentance. Christ calls him the greatest among men; Mat. xi. 11, declares him to be a prophet, and more than a prophet; (ib. 9,) to be the second, the mystical great Elias foretold and prefigured by the prophets for so many ages; (ib. 14,) nay to be the angel mentioned by Malachy. Yet the Baptist has so mean an opinion of himself, that he denies he is any thing of all these, and says he is no more than a feeble voice, the instrument of God's word; than an empty sound, and in himself a mere nothing.

We miserable sinners, dear Christians, "fall infinitely short of the virtue and sanctity of St. John; yet our hearts are full of pride." St. Chrys. Hom. 15, in Joan. This is the source of our tepidity, imperfections, and sins. Had we but a part of St. John's humility, we should in proportion have a share in his other virtues; for our progress in perfection depends so much on humility, that without this we cannot make any step towards it; but with it we shall obtain all virtues, with a perfect mastery over our passions, and kill them in their very roots. To convince you of this point I shall endeavour to show, that humility is of all virtues the most acceptable to Almighty God, and the ground-work of all spiritual progress. First, let us implore the grace of God by the intercession of his humble hand-maid, who by her great humility became worthy to be raised above all creatures, and chosen mother of God, Ave Maria, &c.

Humility is of all virtues the most pleasing in the sight of God, as pride is of all sins the most detestable to his divine majesty. All other sins rather run from God; pride alone sets itself up against him, declares to his face war against him, and openly usurps to itself perfections, which belong to God alone. Whereas, God created all things for himself,[a] he is of all points the most jealous in this, that he will be acknowledged the sole principle and author of all good, and have all creatures remain in due subjection to him, from whose goodness they received all they have. "My honour I will give to no one." But pride in some measure attempts to dethrone him, turns him out of his title to his own gifts, and usurping them to herself cries out: "I will ascend and be like unto the Most High." Hence, God in every part of holy writ thunders out the most dreadful curses against pride. He says the proud are an abomination to him; and declares, that he hates and abhors them, and that his soul even loathes their sight. The prophets contain little else than a continued violent invective against this execrable vice. Hence, St. Peter and St. James say: "God resists the proud." 1 Pet. v. 5; James iv. 6. Alas! what can we say of a base creature, which has a necessary entire dependance on God even to move and breathe, yet dares to resist him! Must not she certainly be crushed by the weight of his omnipotent hand? "See, brother, what a great evil pride is, which has God for its enemy." St. Jerom. But as God detests pride as his capital enemy, so he loves and cherishes above all things humility. It is to the humble he promises all his favours. He solemnly engages his divine word always to hear their prayers. "The prayer of him that humbles himself penetrates the clouds, and returns not back till the Most High regards it." Eccl. xxxv. 21. For, such is God's tenderness towards the humble, that he can never refuse their petitions. "Thou wert always pleased with the prayer of the meek and humble." Judith ix. 16. "He has attended to the prayer of the humble, nor has he despised their supplication." Ps. ci. 18. Nay so ready is he to grant their requests, that he even anticipates the most sacred desires of their hearts, before they ask him. "The Lord has hearkened to the dispositions of their heart." Yes, dear Christians, if we have but true humility, God will deny us nothing; we shall have heaven at command, and enjoy all its treasures for asking them. But he not only hears their prayers; "Whose are all the good things, Israel?" Yes, to the humble belong all God's promises and gifts; it is for the humble alone he has prepared his eternal kingdom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," (i. e.) the mean and contemptible in their own eyes, says St. Augustin, (super Serm. in monte,) "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Mat. v. 3: and Christ possitively tells us, that unless we become as little children, (i. e.) full of an entire distrust in ourselves and our own weakness, we shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. It is also to the humble that God dispenses his graces in this life. "He resists the proud, but gives his grace to the humble." Luke, i. 52, 53. He sends away the proud and full confounded; but exalts the poor and humble, and fills them with his spiritual treasures; it is his delight to shower on them all the abundance of his heavenly riches. The centurion received great praises and blessings from Christ in recompense of his humility. The publican, professing himself unworthy to look towards heaven, returned home highly in God's favour, though before a scandalous sinner; whilst the Pha-

[a] Universa propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus.

risee relying on his merits was cast off by God. So true it is what Christ assures us: "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted." Luke xi. 14. For, it is in proportion to our humility that God bestows his graces upon us; the rule of his graces is the measure of our humility, and he usually prepares men for extraordinary blessings by a greater humility, as he did with regard to the Cananean woman, first making her compare herself to the whelps that lick up the crums, which fall from the table. This was always the rule, according to which God distributed his blessings, as we see in Gideon, David, and all others, whom he raised to great favours in the old law; but it is much more so in the light of the gospel, which is properly the law of humility. Mankind, as it were by inheritance from Adam, were all infected with a cursed spirit of pride. To heal so deep a wound, to cure so inveterate a distemper rooted in the very soul of man, the Son of God humbled himself so far as to become man, to be born in extreme poverty, to live in the utmost contempt and want, and to die on an ignominious cross, and appear as the outcast of mankind. "I am a worm, not a man: the outcast of men and despised by the people." Isa. liii. 3. He began and completed the victory over hell by humility. He chose for his precursor a saint, whose distinguishing character was humility, and selected the most humble of mortals to enrich her with all his graces, to raise her above the seraphim, and make her his ever immaculate mother. "Because he has looked upon the humility of his handmaid; behold for this all generations shall call me blessed." Luke i. 48. Hence St. Leo, (Serm. de Epiphan.) "Humility is the whole of Christian wisdom, of our Saviour's victory, which has subdued the devil and the world, a victory which was planned and completed by humility." Christ's whole life was a perfect example of the most consummate humility, and his preaching tended entirely to plant this virtue in our hearts. "Christ taught that the practice and the reward of faith are found in humility." St. Hil. in Ps. 118. He says to all his followers: "Learn of me, because, I am meek and humble of heart." Learn of me not to conquer nations, or to be great according to the world; learn not of me to work miracles, to draw upon you the eyes of the world, and make yourselves admired by signs and wonders, but to be meek and humble of heart, to be mean and contemptible in your own eyes. What a subject of confusion must it be to us to see a God humble himself to such a degree to cure our pride? "He was rich, but for your sake he became poor; that you might become rich by his poverty." He divests himself of his glory, lays aside all marks of his infinite majesty, hides his immensity under the members of a weak impotent child, wrapped in rags, laid in a manger, and destitute of all succour; he conceals his divinity under the cover of the greatest poverty, and appears in the most contemptible state even among his creatures, to the end that he might teach us humility. "A powerful medicine! if this do not cure our pride, I know not what will. God becomes man; and all the frailty, all the infirmities of humanity do not convince us that we are but men." St. Aug. Serm. 77, p. 423, t. 5, ed. Ben. Can we pretend, whilst we are filled with a vain conceit of ourselves, ever to be members of so humble a head, ever to be enrolled among the disciples of Christ, and heirs of his kingdom? No, certainly. He strictly enjoins all his followers to imitate his example. Having waited on his disciples at supper, and washed their feet, he tells them: "I have given you an example, that as I have done you do also." Unless we imi-

tate our divine master in this heavenly virtue, unless we become like children by humility, we can never hope to be pleasing in his sight, or sharers of his kingdom. But humility is not only the most acceptable virtue in the sight of Almighty God; it is even the ground-work and foundation of all Christian perfection, without which there can be no true virtue.

The Holy Ghost assures us that "pride is the beginning of all sin." Pride is the parent, and only gate of hell. It transformed the prince of angels into the blackest of devils; it drove Adam out of paradise, who by an inordinate desire of acquiring a knowledge like to God lost the happy state of innocence and grace, and involved himself and all his posterity in so many miseries. This cursed spirit of pride still infects all mankind, and is the cause, the source of all the sins committed in the world. If truth itself declare, that pride is the source of all sin, it is evident, says St. Prosper, that without it no sin ever was, or will be, or can be committed. And it would be easy to show by an induction, that there is no vice, which owes not its rise to pride; for this is not only a particular capital sin; but it is also a general vice which attends all other sins, as St. Thomas observes. Other vices attack directly but one virtue, to which they are directly contrary, but pride destroys at once all virtues. This tyrant of our passions, this mother and queen of vices, (St. Greg. Mor. l. 31,) has no sooner seized upon a soul, than it delivers her over to all other sins as to its cruel ministers and agents to be laid waste by them. Nay, it is often an effect of God's mercy to permit the proud soul to fall into some palpable sins, that she may be brought to open her eyes. St. Peter might perhaps, have never discovered and washed away the fault of his presumption with those penitential tears, had he not fallen into an open denial of his Divine master. How grievous then must be the wound of pride, when the greatest sins are in some sense its remedy, and perhaps, sometimes the only hope of its cure! "I am not afraid to say, that it is an advantage to the proud to fall into some grievous and notorious sin."[a] St. Aug. This is then, what St. Augustin with good reason thinks the royal prophet calls the greatest of all sins, and begs so earnestly to be cleansed from. "And I shall be cleansed from the greatest of all sins." But as pride, says St. Chrysostom, (Hom. 15, in Mat. p. 185,) is the fortress of the devil, the root and the source of all sin, so has Christ given a proper remedy against it, by making humility the ground-work of the gospel, as it is the foundation of all virtue, without which no structure of piety can be thought of. For this reason, he begins his heavenly doctrine by pronouncing the humble blessed. Humility is the guardian of all virtues; without it all mortifications, chastity, &. are false and vicious. St. Anthony saw all the world set in snares and dangers, and in a fright asked who could escape? but heard, "humility can defend us." Ruf. l. 3, vit. S. Ant. Humility is the foundation of virtue, first, because, without it there can be no true virtue. All the virtues, that were in the heathen philosophers, were but false and counterfeit, and accordingly vanished as smoke, because influenced by a cursed pride, says St. Bruno in Rom. And he, that attempts to acquire any "virtue without humility, does but scatter dust before the wind." St. Greg. in Isai. iii. "If this foundation be wanting or tottering, the whole structure of virtues is but a ruin." St.

[a] Audeo dicere superbis utile esse cadere in aliquod apertum & manifestum peccatum, &c.

Bernard, l. 3, de cons. c. 14. Secondly, it is the foundation of virtue, because, without it we can never begin nor persevere stedfast in virtue. Hence, St. Augustin says: "the first disposition to a virtuous life is humility; the second is humility; the third is humility; and as often as you ask me, so often shall I always answer, the same humility." And St. Basil defines it, "the most secure treasures of all virtues." Ep. 56, ad Dion. Monast. Const. It is by humility alone we can ever hope to make the first step towards acquiring any virtue; it is by humility alone we must preserve what we have acquired. Thirdly, it is the foundation and basis of virtue; because, our progress in all virtues is entirely proportioned to our proficiency in humility. It is according to this that God measures his graces, those divine virtues which he infuses into our souls. Had we but true humility, we should be soon filled with all other virtues in perfection. Take away pride, and you will purge the world from all sin. "He is truly immaculate, who is free from this vice." St. Aug. in Ps. 19. Were we but as humble as the blessed Virgin, we should be as free from all sin, have as great a mastery over our passions, and be as much enriched with all excellent virtues. The perfection of our lives is to be measured by the degree of our humility. "If you desire to be great, begin by being little." St. Aug. The higher the edifice we design to raise, the deeper must be the foundation; the greater degree of perfection we aim at, the greater must be our humility. As a tree grows and flourishes the more, the deeper its roots shoot into the earth, so the greater your humility, the higher will be your virtue. "It shoots its root downwards, and so produces fruit. 4 Kings xix. 30. St. Simeon Stylites, when he first consecrated himself to a more perfect life, had a mysterious vision; he seemed to himself to be digging the foundation of a very high edifice, and being exceeding weary and spent with labour and toil heard a voice repeated thrice to him: "Dig deeper, dig deeper, dig deeper;" by which he understood he could never labour too much to acquire a sufficiently perfect humility, to serve as a solid foundation of the edifice of christian perfection. Have we not all reason to admire and praise with perpetual acts of thanksgiving the infinite goodness of Almighty God, who has made our perfection consist in a thing so easy, so proportioned to every one's capacity? Had he commanded us, as kings on earth do their generals and ministers, to conquer nations and armies, to take cities, or to raise ourselves in the state, and push our fortune by projects and industry, many might justly complain they had not the learning, the abilities, riches, and other things necessary for such great undertakings. Besides, a happy success in such attempts often depends more on accident than on our endeavours. But God requires neither wit, nor strength, nor treasures, nor any other qualifications, nor hard conditions; he commands us only to humble ourselves. To raise ourselves might perhaps, be often out of our power, but to become humble, to debase ourselves at the consideration of our ingratitude, weakness, and misery, can certainly be no such impossible or difficult task. In this we can have no excuse. As then, dear christians, it is humility alone that can make us acceptable to Almighty God, and we become so much the more pleasing to him, by how much the more we appear mean and contemptible in our own eyes; "the greater value we set upon ourselves, the more contemptible do we appear in the sight of God, and the more we despise ourselves, the more will God esteem us;" (St. Greg. Mor. l. 18,) let us to the utmost of our power employ all

our endeavours to acquire this virtue, and to banish from our hearts that cursed pride, which is the spring of all our other passions, and which often infects the best of our actions. Let us remain convinced, that this is the most heinous and most pernicious of all the capital sins. "Comparatively speaking, it would be better for a man to be guilty of every other sin than to be a slave to pride."[a] St. Greg. Moral. ib. "It is the most evident mark of eternal reprobation, as humility is the proper character of the elect." Pride is the proper badge of the devil. "He is the sovereign of all the sons of pride." Job xli. 25. Without this virtue, which is the very essence of a christian life, we can never be called disciples of Christ, or hope to be partakers of his graces. "It is in vain that we bear the name of christians, if we do not imitate Christ. He declares himself to be the way, that his disciples may learn their duty from the tenor of his life, and the servant practice that humility, which was chosen by his master." St. Leo in Nat. Dom. If we imitate his humility we shall share in his promises, and, in proportion to our progress in this virtue, be exalted in the kingdom of heaven, open only to the humble and poor in spirit. For this reason the scriptures every where call the predestinated the "poor of God," (Ps. lxxi. 2, i. e.) those, that are poor in their opinion of themselves, and who esteem themselves to have nothing; (St. Aug. in Ps. 71,) and our blessed Redeemer by this name calls his dear troop; "Fear not, thou little flock, for it has pleased God to give you a kingdom." Luke xii. 32. He calls his church thus, says venerable Bede, "for the sake of humility, because, by humility he will have it grow, and through humility obtain a kingdom."

DISCOURSE LX.

ON THE MEANS OF OBTAINING HUMILITY.

Gladly, therefore, will I glory in mine infirmity, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 2 Cor. xii. 9.

St. Paul says: that, though he was called to the apostleship of the Gentiles, and "in nothing inferior to those, who were apostles in the most eminent degree," yet "he was nothing;" (2 Cor. xii. 11,) though he was favoured with the greatest graces, and the highest revelations, though he had been caught up to the third heaven, yet he valued not himself on any thing of this: "for myself," says he, "I will glory in nothing but in my weaknesses;" and again, "willingly will I glory," &c. v. 5, v. 9. Nay so great was his love of abjection and humility, that in the greatest humiliations he found his greatest pleasure. "I please myself in my weaknesses, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for, when I am weak, then I am powerful." v. 10. He knew that God chooses the weak, and the contemptible, or those that are nothing, to break the wise and great, and confound those who seem to be something; he knew that of himself he was nothing, and, that to be strength-

[a] Qui superbus est, melius ei erat ad comparationem mali, ut omnia alia vitia haberet.

ened by the grace of Christ, he must be penetrated with a deep sense of his own weakness. It was his profound humility, which prepared St. Paul to be that vessel of election, and perfect pattern of all virtues, and which drew so copious a blessing from heaven on his labours; and it is by the perfect practice of this same divine virtue, that we must both lay the foundation of all virtue in our souls, and advance daily in the ways of christian perfection. The primitive christians were thus perfect, because, truly grounded in humility. St. Chrysostom justly admires how amongst them, all sought to obey, none to command; how ready, how cheerful all were to obey; how superiors treated all even with honour and respect; because every one, superiors and inferiors, regarded himself as the unworthy servant of all others in the ministry, in which God had placed them. We are so far from their perfection, because, so far from their humility. A cursed pride reigns throughout all our discourses, actions, and whole behaviour; infecting all states and conditions; from the king to the beggar every one studies in all he does to aggrandize himself, to show the talents he is endowed with, or at least to appear what he really is not. This is the spring of all our actions, of all the motions of our hearts. "This is the wine, with which all the inhabitants of the earth are made drunk;" (Apoc. xvii. 2,) this is the first lesson we learn in schools; nay, the deadly poison we suck in from our most tender years; it is strengthened by example, and by habit becomes a second nature; it is inbred in our flesh, closely riveted in our very bones; and lurks undiscovered in the foldings of our heart, even when we have got a mastery over all our other passions; for pride always remains for us to fight against; the more we perfectly overcome it, the more we humble ourselves, the more does God infuse into our souls the treasures of his virtues. "On whom shall I cast my eyes but on the poor, the contrite, and him that feareth my words?" That we may labour effectually to root out this master-spring of all our our passions, "a hidden inherent pride;" it is my design to point out the principal means we ought to make use of for this end. Ave Maria.

Humility is defined by St. Bernard, "a true knowledge of ourselves, by which we become sincerely contemptible in our own eyes;" "Let all your thoughts begin and end in yourself; consider what and who you are." lib. de cons. It resides partly in the understanding, inasmuch as it is a perfect knowledge of ourselves, of our own nakedness and miseries, and partly in the will, inasmuch as it is a moral virtue. The principal means, by which this twofold humility is to be acquired, are the subject of this discourse; viz. as it implies a knowledge of ourselves, my first part; and as it produces in us a sincere contempt of ourselves, and a distrust in our own abilities and strength, my second part.

Many men know many things; study to measure the heavens and count the stars; spend nights and days to make new discoveries, and unravel the most obscure knots; and dive into the mysteries of faith, and into all passages of scripture: but suppose they knew all nature, had acquired the sciences of all books and libraries, all this is only toil and vanity, if they have not studied the science of the saints, the knowledge of themselves, of their own nakedness, poverty, and miseries. Learning without this all-necessary knowledge fills us only with presumption and self-conceit, and a poor idiot will be far more capable of advancing in virtue and promoting the service of God in others than we with all our studies. "Better founded is the hope of the unwise." This is that true wisdom, which

teaches us all virtue, and draws upon us all the treasures of God's graces. "With it I received all good things." Wisd. vii. 11. Now the means, by which this knowledge of ourselves is to be acquired, are serious and attentive meditation and fervent prayer. I say attentive meditation; for, a slight reflection will never be able to penetrate the darkness, which surrounds us, and can only make a faint impression on our souls. James i. 27. This would only make us like a man, who, beholding himself in a looking-glass, immediately turns away, and forgets what he had seen in himself; but we must let our meditation sink into our souls, and by it, remain always penetrated with a deep sense of our own nothingness, weakness, and misery. "I am a man conscious of my poverty." Jer. iii. 1. Most men see in their imagination not themselves, their own weakness and misery, but certain phantoms of perfection quite different from what they really are. To remedy this evil, to dispel these clouds, we must seriously consider that, of ourselves, we are a mere nothing, for so many ages we were nothing, and should have remained so for all eternity, had not God drawn us out of that abyss; had he not called us by our names, and given us all we are or have, we should all still be less than the basest insect, less than the least grain of sand, or particle of dust that is trodden under our feet. We are then, of ourselves, a mere nothing, both as to soul and body; as to all our faculties and senses; as to our very being. As God is a necessary, self-existent, absolute, independent being, "I AM WHO I AM," (Exod. iii. 14,) so we are necessarily so many nothings. Our very name is nothingness; all we can claim a title to in the order of nature, grace, or glory, comes entirely from God; and so essential is this nothingness to us, that God, though omnipotent, cannot make us be any thing of ourselves, and independently of him. Did not God, moreover, preserve us every moment as to all we have or are; did not he move our will, senses, and members in all we do, we should instantly drop into our original abyss. Can we then be puffed up as if we were something? "If any one think himself something, while he is really nothing, he deceives himself." Gal. vi. 3. Yet how little is this thing nothing known or considered by men? "I was reduced to nothing, and I knew it not." As then I am nothing, I will remain in my centre; will never regard myself as worth any thing, as having any merit, any perfection of my own.

Secondly, consider the great miseries, to which we are inevitably subject. We were conceived in sin, and came into the world the children of wrath, with many cruel wounds in soul and body. "Thy origin and thy genealogy may be traced to the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorrhæhan and thy mother a Cethæan." Ezec. xvi. 3. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" 1 Cor. iv. 7. "Groundless is thy vanity." We were born in tears, and live in toil and anxiety; subject to heat and cold, hunger and thirst, weariness, and a thousand pains and accidents in every sense, and part of our body; an army of distempers hovers over us, and attacks us sometimes single, sometimes in complication together. We stand condemned under an inevitable sentence of death, uncertain every moment when it will be executed upon us; certain only that this life, replenished with miseries, shall soon end; and that then our body will turn to dust, and become a nest of worms, of filth, and stench. "I said to putrefaction, thou art my father, and to the worms, ye are my mother and my sister." Job xvii. 14. Our soul still groans under

greater miseries, surrounded with darkness and ignorance, a prey to shameful passions, and a thousand inordinate affections; her will depraved and bent to evil by the weight of concupiscence, but feeble and languishing in all that regards God and her eternal good, unable to form the least good desire without God's special grace.

Thirdly, if you have forfeited your baptismal innocence by mortal sin, or perhaps, by repeated and grievous sins, what reason have you not to be filled with confusion and to humble yourselves below all creatures, and in some sense below the devils themselves? They sinned indeed, but only once; Heb. vi. 4. they had never received the immense benefit of a redemption, and had not the blood of a God to trample under foot: Heb, x. 26, but you after so many solemn engagements made in the sight of God, his angels, and the whole church, after so many sacraments, and so many graces received, have crucified again your Redeemer, and polluted the blood of the new testament. You hope, but cannot certainly know, that your sins are pardoned: you know you have sinned, but know not whether your repentance has been sincere and acceptable in the sight of God. And though we ought to confide in God's mercy, still that our sins are blotted out, is due to his goodness alone: and this clemency serves rather to aggravate our ingratitude: as, if a king pardon a traitor, the crime against so good a prince appears only the more heinous. It is still no less eternally true, you have sinned, you have been author of so monstrous an evil in the sight of heaven and earth, though God's mercy shines in having blotted out that stain. A certain solitary followed this practice; he imagined that all, even inanimate creatures upbraided him with his ingratitude, and cried out to him, what dost thou do on earth, who hast deserved hell? But we, who have done no penance for our sins, live securely. "Can you think it a matter of small consequence to have sinned?" Jos. xxii. 16. But suppose, that by a particular grace you may have preserved the robe of baptismal innocence unspotted, this is wholly due to God's distinguishing mercies to you. Had he not removed you from the occasions, or preserved you by his singular graces, you would have surpassed in the heinousness of your crimes the greatest sinners. "If I have avoided sin I owe it to thy grace; and what I have avoided I consider as forgiven by thee. Let him then love more, who is free from the bonds of sin." St Aug. Conf. l. 2. c. 1. So, your obligation is but the greater to Almighty God. "It is a greater favour to be preserved in innocence than to have our sins pardoned."[a] St. Aug. super. Gen. ad Litt. But, reflect in what manner you have answered these obligations. If you have done all that is commanded you, and in the greatest perfection, you must still say, "We are unprofitable servants." Luke xvii. 10, Does a master thank a servant for doing what he was obliged to do?

From our creation and conservation we by a double title owe to God all that we have or are. "All things are thine, and we have returned what we received from thee." 1 Paral. xxix. 14. And for the benefit of our redemption what shall we be able to repay? Though we spent every drop of our blood, it would be nothing to the precious blood of a God spilt for us. Again, all our good works are to be ascribed solely to God: it is his grace which produces them in us: and nothing is due to us only a greater obligation to God's mercy. "Without me you can do nothing."

[a] Major gratia impenditur illi, cui conservatur innocentia, quam cui remittitur culpa.

John xv. 5. "We cannot so much as form a good thought of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." 2 Cor. iii. 5. "It is not he that wills, nor he that runs, but God's mercy alone, to which all is due." Rom. v. 16. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and strength, because thou hast created all things." Apoc. iv. 10.

Reflect on the other side in what manner you have corresponded with God's extraordinary graces, how often from the first moment, in which you were capable, you have every day by negligence and malice, by omission and commission, by all the senses of your body and all the faculties of your soul, multiplied sins beyond all measure, so that they surpass in number the hairs of your head, and the stars of the firmament; how you have been rebellious to his graces and calls, and gratified yourself in sloth, sensuality, and excess in almost all your actions; how vanity, human respect, and tepidity creep in and spoil your best actions. And did you but know yourselves, could you but sound the bottom of your own hearts, you would see it filled with nothing but corruption and sinful affections, tyrannised over by a legion of furious passions. If we must give an account of every idle word, of every moment not husbanded to advantage, must not such an army of sins strike us dumb, considering the severity of our all-seeing judge? "What is all our justice in the sight of God? Does not the prophet compare it to the vilest rags? (Isa. lxiv. 6.) If we would form a true judgment of our real merit, we should conclude that all our virtues are imperfect and below the standard." St. Bern. in Job ix. 15. "If I possess the appearance of virtue, I will not answer, but I will have recourse to my judge." Consider again the uncertainty whether you are in the state of grace. St. Paul, though immediately inspired in all he preached and wrote, yet trembled at this thought: "I am not conscious of any thing," &c. so true it is that "no man knows whether he be worthy of love or hatred;" much less whether he shall persevere in grace to the end. Had Judas, at the time when he shone among the apostles, the gift of miracles, and commanded the devils, searched the bottom of his heart, and stifled his rising passion, he would not have betrayed his divine master. God only knows (can we think of this without trembling?) whether we have not at this instant some latent passion, some seed in our heart, which may prove our eternal reprobation. How many admired by the world have by some secret pride been thrown headlong into the precipice? We are of ourselves unable to stand: a child walking down a steep hill of ice is not so near a fall as we are to sin, if left to ourselves. We are weakness itself; yet surrounded with enemies, and hanging every moment as it were by a thread over the precipice of sin, and consequently over hell itself; it is but a step for us to sink into that dreadful abyss. St. Anthony saw all the earth covered with snares, and heard a voice: "Humility alone shall escape with safety." Rufin. Vit. St, Ant. lib. 3, c. 129. These and such like considerations, pondered frequently and at leisure, will penetrate us with the true idea of our own nakedness and misery. But, this is only the ground of humility; the devil is convinced of his own miseries, yet as proud in his ignominy as he was once in glory. The heathen philosophers have given many excellent speculations concerning the knowledge of ourselves, yet were filled with pride. True humility consists in this, that, as we see ourselves destitute of all good, and full of nothing but corruption, so, we have a sincere contempt of ourselves, and a true affection of humility in the bottom of our heart. The mere know-

ledge of ourselves is very different from true christian humility, which is an effect of grace. The former affects not the heart, changes not the affection; but the latter formed by charity inflames and penetrates the heart, and influences our actions.

The means by which this contempt of ourselves is to be acquired, are prayer and frequent acts of humiliation. The more we converse with God, the more we see his infinite perfections, and the more clearly we read in them our own miseries and imperfections. By this heavenly conversation our soul is overspread with a divine light, by which our least faults appear to us in their true colours; (i. e.) as monstrous evils, One ray of this heavenly light discovers our miseries more clearly to us than all our reflections can do; as one ray of the sun enlightens objects much better than all the stars together. Thus the blessed spirits in heaven humble themselves the more, the nearer they approach to God's throne; and by this means the saints on earth see and express so feelingly their own unworthiness, as St. Francis, St. Catharine of Sienna, and St. Teresa. The more Abraham saw of God's infinite majesty, the more did he drown himself in the abyss of his own nothingness. Gen. xviii. 27. Moses had a defect in his speech, a great confusion before the multitude; St. Paul "The sting of the flesh." St. Chrysostom (in Mat.) observes, that God causes vicissitudes of consolation and affliction in all his servants to preserve humility, as in the case of St. Joseph. Isaiah no sooner saw God on the throne of his glory, than he perceived his lips were too impure to pronounce his greatness; and Job, contemplating the divine essence, was confounded and humbled himself more, acknowledging he was nothing but dust and ashes. But those who are buried in sin, or have not the true spirit of prayer, are strangers to this its effect; however, if we desire to become humble, we must practice fervent prayer, and frequent ejaculations to Almighty God, filled with an awful respect. We must adore his infinite riches, bounty, and mercy; we must consider our own poverty, weakness, and sinful ingratitude; and above all, must frequently pray, that God remove from us all pride. "Let me not tread the path of pride." Ps. xxxv. 12.

The second means to acquire this virtue is to practise frequent acts of humiliation. All habits are acquired and strengthened by repeated acts; and the more frequent, the more intense these acts are, the more do they increase the habit. "Humiliation is the road to humility as patience is to peace. If you refuse to humble yourself, you will never attain humility," St. Bern. ep. 87. We must practise these acts towards God, ourselves, and our neighbour. Towards God; annihilating ourselves before his infinite majesty, and continually presenting ourselves before his throne as naked, blind, and leprous, unable to do any thing: "To God alone be honour and glory;" 1 Tim. i. 17. and confounded at the sight of our ingratitude we must with the twenty-four elders lay our crowns at his feet, and sincerely acknowledge we have nothing but from him. We must thank him that he disdains not to look down on such despicable ungrateful creatures, and beg he would deliver us from the tyranny of our passions. We exercise humility in regard to ourselves, remaining always in the centre of our own nothing; penetrated with a sense of our own poverty, weakness, and misery; having always before our eyes our baseness and past ingratitude, and crying out to God: "Thus, O my God, I live; and is this life?" St. Aug, Conf. b. 2. We must perpetually detest the corruption and secret

pride of our hearts. If we see not this pride it is certain we have not a true knowledge of ourselves; for, were we free from pride, we should be free from all other sins. We must regard ourselves unworthy of the air we breathe and of the water we drink; unworthy of all consolation: of all graces from heaven; unworthy to live on the earth, or to be joined to God's servants; but worthy of all evils, of all diseases and afflictions; worthy of all spiritual dryness, of all trouble and anxiety; of all contempt from God and his creatures; nay of eternal torments. We receive with joy whatsoever miseries we meet with, as not equal to what we deserve, and thanking God that he is pleased to treat us in this manner. In consolations we must be confounded to see God caress us instead of punishing us, and be persuaded he does it to condescend to our weakness, we not being able to suffer for him as his true servants do. In our failings we must humbly detest our malice and sloth, but not repine at ourselves. It would be a mark of great pride to be dejected, because, we are not such as we proudly imagined we were. In our good works we must always fear our tepidity, and some sinister intention. We must take care to practise no extraordinary actions, except by advice, and that never in public. We must endeavour to conceal our good works; for he, that carries a treasure openly, desires to be robbed of it. Yet we must perform devoutly our duties, that we may scandalize no one, but that our light shine before men. But in this, "like travellers, let us not consider how far we have gone, but how much of our journey still remains." We ought to be more ashamed of the good works we have omitted, than rejoice at those we have performed." St. Greg. l. 22, mor, c. 6. With regard to our neighbour, we must put the best constructions on his actions: we must extol his virtues, excuse his failings; "considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." Reflect on yourself, and you will be persuaded that no one could be more ungrateful to God than you have been. Had God as a just punishment abandoned you to yourself, you would have fallen much worse than others; and if you are preserved, it is only God's grace which has distinguished you; "For who distinguishes thee?" 1 Cor. iv. 7. As for your own heart you see its corruption and sinful affection, while you see only the exterior actions of others; thus you may justly be persuaded you are of all the most vile, the most miserable, and the most ungrateful. "O man, compare not thyself to the great, nor to the little, nor to any one." St. Bern. Serm. 37, in Cant. "I will submit to the wrath of God, whom I have offended." Mic. ii. 9. "Have patience in humility." Eccl. ii. 4. "The proud live in perpetual contention." Prov. xiii. 10.

How dost thou know but that he, whom thou contemnest, is predestined by God to be one of the greatest among his saints? Hence, we are commanded to sit in the last place to show, that we ought to prefer every one before us. We ought then in our hearts to serve all as our betters, as friends, or at least creatures of God. Our Saviour has said: "I came not to be served, but to serve." We ought to consider always, how far we fall short of the saints, receiving with patience and even joy, all affronts and injuries, and thanking God that we are made worthy to be treated as we deserve. We ought to love and seek for contempt, as we see that by our unworthiness we deserve nothing else. The saints earnestly desired to be like Christ in suffering the greatest contradictions and contumelies, and were never more glad than when they met with them, and prayed for nothing in this life but "to suffer and be

contemned." If we hear any commendations or meet with esteem, we must remember this is often nothing but flattery, whilst the same persons despise us in their hearts. If they truly esteem us, it may be attributed to our hypocrisy. St. Ephrem wept if he heard himself commended, considering with how much shame, all his disguise and wretchedness would at the last day be exposed to those very persons. But, because it is difficult often to hear praises and not to be delighted secretly with them. "If my heart has secretly rejoiced;" Job xxxiv. 26, it is much more secure to meet with nothing but contempt and contradictions. But, how far are we from this? We magnify ourselves in words and actions; vindicate all to ourselves in every thing that succeeds; but in disappointments excuse ourselves, saying we foresaw that, or we were of a contrary opinion. Do not our obstinate contentiousness, our unwillingness to submit to others, our boastings, our pretences and excuses on all occasions demonstrate, that all our failings and sins proceed from the pride of our hearts? "From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

If then we use these means, we shall at once cut up the root of all our sins; but we can never entirely eradicate it out of our breasts. This passion always remains for us to fight against. We are obliged every day to labour for a more perfect mastery over it. Let others seek for grandeur in honour and riches; but we are Christians, and know that humility is our only greatness; let us then humble ourselves below all creatures; it is not crying we are sinners, that can make us humble; pride endeavours always to palliate itself under a feigned appearance of humility; but we must be penetrated with a true knowledge and sense of our nothingness, our weakness, and malice; we must by prayer and a love of contempt labour to obtain the true spirit of this virtue. It is this sense of our own poverty, that alone can make us disciples of Christ, and give us security, as well as a true confidence in God's assistance. "Fear not, you little flock, because, it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom." Luke xii. 32. "I know how to humble myself, and how to abound." Phil. iv. 12. "By honour and dishonour, by bad and good repute." 2 Cor. vi. 8.

DISCOURSE LXI.

ON PERFECTION, WHEREIN IT CONSISTS, AND HOW TO BE ACQUIRED.

For this is the will of God, your sanctification. 1 Thess. iv. 3.

We acknowledge that the great, the only end of our creation, the infinite majesty of Almighty God, our immediate dependence on him, and our immense obligations to his sovereign goodness for our creation, conservation, and redemption, with a thousand other titles, call upon us to serve him with a true and perfect heart, and to make this the chief, the only business of our life. We cannot but be sensible he most strictly enjoins, not only that we serve him, but that we do it in the most perfect manner. He ushers forth his divine commands in the most express terms: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength." He declares we cannot serve two masters; for he will not

be served by halves. If we give him not our heart entire, we give him nothing. If then we pretend to serve God, we must do it with a perfect heart. "Serve him with a perfect and true heart." Jos. xxiv. 14. But the very name of perfection affrights us; it seems to breathe only rigour and tears; we regard it as the business only of recluses, and imagine it would be presumption to aim at it. It is true, the perfection of religious and lay persons, and that of each particular state is very different. Yet perfection is an essential duty incumbent on all Christians. "Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect." Mat. v. To convince you in what this obligation consists, and how easy it is to be complied with, I shall first endeavour to shew, that the perfection, which God requires of us, consists in well performing our ordinary actions; and in my second part to prescribe in what manner this is best complied with. It is by this easy practice you may every minute treasure up new merits for heaven, become perfect servants of Christ and true saints. The subject then certainly deserves your attention. Ave Maria.

Perfection consists not in raptures and lofty contemplation; nor in great austerities, or any extraordinary actions: for thus, it would have been above the reach of many. But God has placed it in what is easy, and in every one's power. The rich and poor, the learned and unlearned may equally aim at perfection; for it requires only that we perform our daily actions in a spirit of true Christian virtue "The commandment which I give is neither above thee, nor far removed from thee. My word is with thee, in thy mouth and thy heart, that thou practise it." Deut. xxx. 11, 14. What I advance is easily proved. It is evident, that our virtue ought to be habitual to us: the practice of it must be frequent, must be continual; we must be holy not by fits, but by habit; we must practise virtue at home and abroad, in all times and places. Consequently, our sanctification can never consist in great and extraordinary actions, which, as they are extraordinary, so, of course must be rare; occasions of practising them seldom occur. It is then our ordinary actions performed in a true spirit of virtue, our sleeping, our eating, our recreations, &c., which must sanctify our lives. And it is a certain, a self-evident principle, that our sanctification consists in most perfectly performing the will of God in all things. "This is the will of God, your sanctification."

It is the ever holy will of God, which gives a value to every thing we do. Without it our greatest works are nothing; with it our meanest actions become highly meritorious. Now, it is plainly the will of God, that we punctually perform all the smallest duties of the state, in which he has placed us, through a sincere desire of complying with his holy will. It is God, who subjects us to the several necessities of nature, of eating, sleeping, &c. It is he, who imposes upon us all the obligations of our present circumstances. Must not then this practice be the means to sanctify our souls, to do all things in a true spirit of virtue, earnestly desiring only to obey the will of God? We have only to perform the same actions we daily do, in a due manner, to make us saints. But, as there is no state of life, which has not its difficulties and dangers, so, every one thinks he meets with the greatest: every one imagines he could be a saint in almost every other profession than the one he is of. You have, dear christians, in your present happy circumstances, many great helps to perfection, which many are deprived of, who earnestly wish they had but half the opportunities of virtue you have, and who would by them become perfect saints; yet is there

none amongst you, who flatters himself he could serve God better in another state, and were he not under his present restraints? This is a most pernicious temptation. Let every one endeavour to sanctify himself in his present state. It is God, who places all men in the circumstances they are in, and gives to each person graces suitable to his calling. Who then dare repine at his condition, dare thus murmur, and rebel against providence? All different states are necessary for the order, for the government and subordination of the world. A king would be nothing without subjects, nor the rich without the poor. God created all states good. "God saw all things, which he had made, and they were very good." Let then every one praise and thank the divine goodness for his condition; and let him regard it as the most conducive to God's honour, and his own good, and consequently for him the best of all others. Only let him study to sanctify his soul in his proper station, thinking himself, too much honoured by God, if he be made the last, the meanest member in his church. "I chose to be the least in the house of the Lord." Let this be his only business, his constant employment to perform all the duties of his respective calling, with an intention to comply in the most perfect manner with the will of God, "and to walk worthy the vocation, in which he is called." By this practice alone we shall be perfect. There are many great saints before God, who never did any thing extraordinary for God; their sanctity is secure and hidden from the eyes of the world, because, it consists in what is common, in what others do equally with them, though not in the same spirit. They are saints not by works, which appear great to men, but by the interior virtue of their heart, which influences and gives a great value to every thing they do. Their constant fidelity to God in the most trivial actions gains his affections, so that he tenders them as his most chaste spouses, and showers upon them all the treasures of his graces. "My sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, with one hair on thy neck." Cant. iv. 9. Our blessed Saviour led a hidden life for thirty years, during which, he did nothing great, nothing wonderful in the eyes of men; yet he had come to be the model of our lives. But all the infinite perfection of his divine virtues then consisted in this, that whether he ate, slept, or prayed, whether he worked with his supposed father, or assisted his holy mother in her employments, he did all having only this most perfect view to fulfil in all things, though ever so small, the will of his heavenly Father. "I always do the things, that are pleasing to him." John viii. 29. What a subject of consolation is this to us, that we have the means of our sanctification so easy, and so near us, in our breasts, in our hearts! We need but do, what we do every day, in a true spirit, to be saints. Let us then consider in what manner we must perform our ordinary actions, that we may reap so great an advantage; this is what I am about to explain in my second part.

"Those who shall strictly observe justice shall be justified." Wisd. vi. 11. It is not doing good works, but doing them well, that makes them agreeable in the sight of Almighty God. Sloth, negligence, and human respect make the very same actions sinful in a tepid christian, which by fervour and a true spirit are made to shine as the brightest jewels in the crowns of saints. The difference then between the lukewarm and perfect christian is not so much in their works, as in the manner in which they perform their works. But, what are the means, by which we must make all our actions so perfect, and our lives so pleasing to Almighty God? I

reduce them all to these four. First, we must perform all our exercises and duties with regularity. Secondly, with an extreme exactness. Thirdly, with fervour and perseverance. Fourthly, in a true spirit of religion.

As to the first, it is most certain that to lead a regular life is of the greatest assistance to virtue. This effectually stops all levity and inconstancy, and is the best method that can be advised, especially, for novices in a spiritual life. Our fervour does not always remain equally great; and when it relents, all our exercises will be soon neglected, unless this neglect be stopped by a strict rule, from which we never permit ourselves to be dispensed. Regularity not only prevents the bad consequences, which ensue from the fickleness and inconstancy of our temper, but is also of itself very meritorious and acceptable to God. He is a God of order; he observes and follows the most exact rule and order in all he does; perfect regularity and a wonderful harmony make up the beauty and perfection of the whole creation. No wonder that he cannot be served by a life of confusion. All disorder must come only from the devil. It is impossible for any one to serve God, even in the world, who does not reduce his life to some tolerable rule. One of the greatest advantages of a religious life is its perfect regularity. The saints all lived regular lives; kings and princes, as holy David, St. Lewis, &c. had their hours fixed. You have, dear christians, a very great advantage as to this part in your present circumstances, in which you are happily tied to a perfect regularity in almost every action. By virtue of this, you know certainly the will of God in all you do. You know at the appointed time, that it is God who calls you to your studies, to your meals, to your recreations, and to all your most trivial actions. You may also perform all these actions out of a perfect obedience to the will of your superiors and of God. This great virtue, if cultivated on such occasions, will quite extirpate self-love, will banish and conquer your own stubborn will, which is the root and nurse of all your passions. "The obedient man shall speak victories." But, time permits me not to say any thing more in favour of obedience, which is necessarily attended with humility, and which, if diligently practised, will alone securely conduct you to the highest degree of perfection. At present, I shall only say, that you have an easy advantage of performing all your actions in the spirit of regularity and obedience, which will add double merit to every action of your life, to every breath you draw. What a help is it, by this means, doubly to know so surely the will of God in all things great and small; and even without any doubting or perplexity? In other states many things are uncertain, which the law of God does not determine, and which cause many doubts and much disquietude to several good persons. But, where all is settled both as to exercises and time, liberty can scarcely abuse any thing; regularity and obedience doubly sanctify all, by reserving all to themselves. Inconsistency and levity are banished. You have but to follow the way traced out before you, to walk securely in the road to perfection, and are dispensed even from the care and trouble of deliberating and examining. "He, that walks with simplicity, walks with confidence." Prov. x. 9.

We must perform our actions, not only with regularity, but also with exactness. We must be exact in performing every action in its due time, place, and manner of doing it. Though every small transgression of regularity, when not attended with contempt, nor proceeding from sloth and indolence, is not a venial sin, yet, to be wilfully deficient in any of these minute circumstances is always an imperfection, and a detriment to

our progress in perfection. "Thou shalt be perfect and spotless with the Lord thy God." If the Israelites in the desart neglected to gather the manna before sun-rise, they were deprived of their portion, to show us that we must be exact to a tittle in every duty, if we hope to receive the increase of grace, which God offers us in that action. If we correspond thus faithfully with God in the smallest things, he will reciprocally be faithful to us, and repay our fidelity by a plentiful abundance of graces. "With the elect thou wilt be elect, and with the perverse thou wilt be perverse."

A third condition necessary for performing our ordinary actions well is fervour. Nothing can be more opposite to the grace of God than sloth and indolence. The Holy Ghost is a fire, which is always active; it is impossible for a soul, which he inflames, not to be carried on with a holy importunity through all difficulties; this ardour is absolutely necessary, especially in the beginning, to surmount the repugnance arising from our pride and sloth, which are unwilling to bend in every smallest point. They will complain that so great, so continual a restraint is intolerable and impossible. To bear up against these difficulties, you must excite in your souls a very great ardour, and a vehement desire of perfection. "The beginning of wisdom is the mastery of our passions." There is nothing, which a vehement desire and strong resolution will not compass; no difficulties that it will not break through with courage and joy. "If then you begin, begin in earnest." St. Bern. But undertake not at first too great a burden. Lay a heavy load on a child, he cannot stand under it; but when grown up he bears it with ease. "I have," says St. Paul, "given you milk, not solid food, for hitherto you were not able," &c. Let not then your first exercises be too burthensome, but perform them with fervour. A trivial action done with fervour is much more acceptable than the greatest works performed with negligence and tepidity. But, it will be of little advantage to us to begin with fervour, unless we persevere, unless we be constant. Many are fervent in certain fits of devotion; but this soon passes. If our fervour diminish, we grow slack of all duties, and find them too tedious and burdensome. Continually to stir up our sluggish nature, we must have constantly before our eyes how great a master we serve; in whose presence all creatures are; whose holy will all things obey, and the angels and seraphims watch continually to comply with. This reflection will push us on to do every minute action in a manner worthy of such sovereign majesty. A holy superior asked a religious man, for whom he did such an action? for God, said he; and are you not ashamed, replies the superior, to do it more negligently than if you did it for me? Consider again your obligations to God for your creation, conservation, and redemption, and endeavour in every action to make a grateful return. God loved you from all eternity; he loved you so much as to spill his blood for you lost in sin; and by consequence, he loved you more than you can love yourselves, more than all creatures together could love you, though they should sacrifice to you all the motions of their hearts. Is it possible, that so great a love of God for you should not excite in you a vehement desire to make him what small return you are able? If you know yourselves, and see the imperfection of your hearts, you see how far you are from perfection. "Thine eyes have seen my imperfection." Say every day, I will now begin. "Not that I had received, or that I was perfect." Phil. iii. 12. "I have said now I begin." Ps. lxxvi. "When a man has performed his duty, he may then be said to have begun," Eccl.

xvii. 6. Consider how much remains to your journey's end. "Thou hast still a long way to go." Cast not your eyes on past good works, "forgetting what is past." Reflect how sloth, sensuality, and human respect have stolen away the merit of all your past actions; now redouble your pace, and "speed on the more as the day is near." Heb. x. 25. Do every action as if it were the last of your lives. Never say, that any action is small and not to be regarded. This frivolous pretence of sloth is the cause of all tepidity, and at length of sin. Is not God able to reward this action as well as the rest? "Is the arm of the Lord shortened?" You are here placed to traffic. "Traffic till I come." Every action may merit a new reward. God puts all to account. By the least thing done for God you not only merit a crown in heaven, but also an increase of grace and perfection in this life. On the contrary, by every imperfection your fervour is impaired, and your virtue diminished. Look into several religious houses, which were once patterns of sanctity and perfection, lights of the world, and the greatest ornaments of the church; but which by a small relaxation in the points of silence and recollection, and inconsiderable deviation from the strict discipline of the rule, opened the way to dissipation and irregularity. The lofty magnificent statue of Nabuchodonosor was thrown by a little stone cut off from a rock, which fell on its feet. Take care then, that the least imperfection never wilfully creep into any action. Under difficulties encourage yourselves, inasmuch as you have now perhaps almost conquered the habit of sloth, and it would be a pity you should relapse again into your former tepidity, and thus by one negligence lose in a great measure the fruit of your labour.

The fourth and principal means to make our actions acceptable to God, is to perform all we do in a spirit of religion and virtue. It is this, that gives all the merit and value to whatever we do. The greatest actions for want of this are of no profit; and nothing is so inconsiderable which, if it proceed from this principle, is not highly meritorious. This is that true philosopher's stone, which turns all things into gold. Let us then make the best advantage of our happy circumstances. We have but to do, what otherwise we are obliged to do, with exactness, fervour, and a true spirit, to become saints. A little labour will make the practice easy. After the first difficulties are surmounted we shall find this exactness a great pleasure; besides the spiritual grace and consolation, the hundred fold promised by Christ, which are an anticipation of the joys of heaven. Let it then be our study to learn, what is the best way of performing our studies and all our duties in the spirit of virtue. What would you not give to become saints? Had you now spent one year, or we will suppose four or five years in this manner, you would even now enjoy the fruit. An apprentice to learn his trade; a scholar to acquire learning grudges not to spend years, &c. Let us make use of the comforts, allowed by God to our bodies, through pure charity, not sensuality. "That you may be perfect and complete, failing in nothing." James i. 4. Let us submit to all the necessities of nature to conform ourselves to the will of God, who subjects us to them. "And he that eats, eats unto the Lord; for he returns thanks to God. And he that eateth not, eateth not unto the Lord, and thanks God. For no one of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself." Rom. xiv. 6, 7. "Wherefore, whether you eat or drink, or perform any other action, do every thing for the glory of God." 1 Cor x. 31, Col. iii. 17.

DISCOURSE LXII.

ON OUR ANGEL GUARDIAN, &C.

GOD "has given command to his angels to be thy guardians in all thy ways." Yes, my soul, his supreme majesty has commanded his angels, those most high, most noble, most happy spirits, so near and so familiar to himself, his own chief domestics. And about what has he given them such positive commands? About thee. Who art thou? As if a man were not nothingness, and the son of man dust and ashes; as if he were not a sinner and enemy of God. What commands therefore has he given about thee to his angels? Are they to execute his justice? to show his power on a leaf, that is carried away by the wind, or to pursue a weak straw? Are they to take the wicked creature from before his presence? No, but that they guard thee in all thy ways. Oh! how solicitous is thy God for thee! how much does he love thee!

Thou hast with thee, my soul, thou hast always present to protect and assist thee a sublime spirit: he is to inspire and direct, to defend and protect, to fight for thee. He is to carry thee, lest thou ever hit thy foot against a stone. He will remove from thee occasions, and strengthen thee against dangers; with him "thou wilt walk securely over the asp and basilisk, and trample upon the lion and dragon." Take courage then thou, who art weak; though surrounded with dangers and enemies, what canst thou fear under such protectors and guardians? They are faithful, they are wise and skilful; they are powerful and strong; nothing can overcome them, nor can they be deceived, and much less can deceive or mislead thee. Follow them, and thou wilt always dwell in the protection of the Most High; be devout and grateful to them; have a confidence in them. If the devil go about like a roaring lion seeking to devour me, my guardian angel is still more watchful to protect me.

These blessed spirits are exceedingly solicitous in my protection; first, because, this is the positive and express command of God, to accomplish whose will perfectly is their own study. Secondly, because, they love me. They expect that the ruins of this heavenly city will be in part filled up by me; they love all whom God loves. Hence, they watch over me with great care every hour and moment ready to assist me, supplying my necessities, running between God and me to carry my prayers and procure for me his grace and mercy. They help me in labour, they protect me in sleep, they encourage me in battle, strengthen me in temptation, rejoice in my good, and compassionate my wants and miseries. There is joy in heaven before the angels of God upon the conversion of one sinner. How much then do my guardians rejoice in my good? Shall I ever deprive them of this joy, and give the subject of triumph to the devils?

Make here, meditations on the other infinite benefits of Almighty God, and the excess of love and goodness he shows towards you in each of them.

Meditate on the great benefit of vocation. How miserable is the state how deplorable the ignorance and blindness of infidels and savage nations? What delivered me from it? the pure goodness of God towards me above so many millions. How many millions are lost in heresy, ignorant

of the true church, deprived of the chief means of salvation? I am distinguished from them. How happy are my circumstances by my vocation? I learn heavenly mysteries, all means of salvation, &c. How important a knowledge beyond all that of arts and sciences?

Again, meditate on the sacraments, (e. g.) baptism. What did I come into the world? Infected with sin, an enemy of God, and under sentence of damnation, it was not in my power to help myself; God loved me then, though his enemy. He by his wonderful and most easy sacrament washed off that deep stain, reversed the sentence, &c. He moreover made me his child, and heir of his kingdom, fellow-member and co-heir with Christ. He clothed me with the beautiful robe of sanctifying grace, &c.

For another meditation choose his love in instituting the sacrament of penance. What ingratitude, what perfidy in me to offend him again, after baptism and all my vows of allegiance? How justly did I deserve no second remedy? The devils met not with any means of mercy even for the first sin. How little, how easy a task does he require of thee for this second reconciliation? Only to repent and love him for the future. Could he demand less? Without this remedy what wouldst thou have done? Had not hell been thy certain portion! God still affords thee this means, O, my my soul to secure past neglects. To how many has he refused the opportunity?

Choose also the blessed eucharist. Consider how in it, God exhausted his infinite wisdom, for he could plan nothing greater; also his infinite power, for he could give nothing more; and his infinite love which knows no bounds.

In like manner meditate on the other sacraments and divine benefits in particular. How many inspirations, calls, and graces I have ever received and what opportunities of serving God and acquiring virtue. How many dangers and occasions he has preserved me from; how often he has strengthened and preserved me: how many occasions he has removed from me: though all this while I ungratefully abused his goodness. I sinned and he dissembled it; I abstained not from offending him, yet he withheld his chastisements; I prolonged my iniquity, and he his mercy.

On his eternal love. Yes, O Lord, you loved me first; consequently not for any merits, or any thing in me, but, purely out of your goodness for me, You loved me before all time. I had no being at all; yet I was present to you; I was in your affection, in your thought. I was nothing in myself, yet I was something in you; because you loved me, before your omnipotent hand had drawn me out of nothing; you loved me from all eternity. It was of me in particular you said: "In eternal charity have I drawn thee." Great, immense as you are, my God, you are pleased to incline your affections down as low as me, not regarding my baseness. You would even take a heart of flesh like mine to enter sensibly into all my miseries. You make it your delight to converse with the children of men. Not content with living on earth, with suffering contumelies, outrages, all distress, torments, and death for me, you have found the secret always to remain with me in the holy sacrament of the eucharist, and to dwell in my heart as in your sanctuary.

On the love he every where expresses for me. He stiles himself my father, that by the most tender and endearing of qualities he may show how much he loves me. What confidence do I place in a parent! but how

much greater ought I to put in God, the best of fathers, the most tender and most powerful! Can a parent forget his child? He loves me far more than a parent can an only son, as he declares by his prophet; he has writ me in his very hands. Is it not then most just I should place a firm confidence in him? Worldly fathers, though wicked, love and give good things to their children. What then will not God do? Courage, my soul! God, whose power and strength are infinite and invincible, whose goodness and mercy have no bounds, is, I say, not only thy patron and protector, but thy most loving and tender Father.

On God's mercies. I have sinned and deserved hell; but my God loves me still, and is desirous to pardon all my past guilt. Fire is not so ready to burn, as he is to forgive all sinners, who return to him. Goodness and mercy is his favourite attribute, in which he surpasses all his other works. He threatens me with hell, not to damn me, but to prevent my falling into it. He has not struck me dead in my sins, but expects me, that upon my repentance he may have mercy on me; for he wills not the death of a sinner; he wills not that any perish, but, that all return to penance. He has no interest in my damnation. He created me to be saved. He loves me as his creature, bearing his own image, and redeemed by his blood. Can I then despair of pardon? He has assured me by his infallible word he will forgive all my sins, be they ever so grievous or so numerous, the very moment I sincerely return to him, because he is rich in mercy. He asks nothing of me but repentance; for he himself has paid the debt. I fly then to thee, my God, full of sorrow for my sins, because I have offended thee, O Father of mercies. If my penance has been hitherto imperfect, make it now at least sincere. I know thou lovest me, and desirest my salvation, and for this, thou invitest me so tenderly, thou pressest so earnestly, thou usest all means to draw me to repentance. I then confide in thy promise and mercy. God can pardon all my sins. He can do all things, and manifest his omnipotent power in his mercy more than in all his other works. Rise then, my soul; why dost thou fear? if the devil would draw thee into despair, answer him: It is true I am the worst of sinners, but God can cancel all; and that he will, I have his divine word for security, and I know his mercy and his love of me are infinite; and that Christ has paid to the full my ransom. His holy passion pleads in my favour. He came and paid my debt for me, nay as much more as the ocean exceeds a single drop of water.

Make distinct meditations on each of the parables of the lost sheep, the prodigal son, &c., or read on them Languet's "Confidence in God."

On courage in temptation. I am surrounded with terrible enemies, but why dost thou fear, my soul? or why art thou troubled? The devil goes about like a roaring lion seeking to devour me: nor is there any power on earth to be compared with his; but he is like a dog in a chain; he cannot hurt me, unless I voluntarily throw myself within his reach. I have my good angel to watch over me by day and by night. I have Almighty God himself covering me with the shield of his protection. The world, like an impetuous torrent, bears every thing down before it; but Christ is my captain. He has overcome it. Have good courage, says he, I have triumphed over it. He lived thirty-three years on earth in humility and sufferings to inspire me with a spirit contrary to that of the world; and by his grace he is ever ready to strengthen me against it. Suffer not, sweet Jesus, that enemy to overcome me, whom thou hast long ago wonderfully subdued.

My flesh is a domestic enemy; I always carry it about with me, and am obliged to nourish and cherish it against myself; but thou, O God, hast decreed, that its concupiscence shall be under my command. Thou art faithful, and wilt never suffer me to be tempted above my strength. I am weakness itself. Therefore, in perfect distrust in myself, I fly to thee, O my God, my Saviour, and protector. Save me, O Lord, whom thy hands have created and whom thou didst redeem with thy precious blood.

DISCOURSE LXIII.

ON THE NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGES OF TRIBULATION.

1. All the children of Adam must necessarily drink largely of the cup of tribulation, though, some have a greater and others a less share of it. Had our first parents never sinned, the case would have stood otherwise, and men might have enjoyed comforts without crosses, and purchased heaven at a cheaper rate. But, in punishment of that transgression, the sentence of labour and pain is passed on all men without exception: "I will multiply thy sorrows." Gen. iii. 1. Though sin be blotted out by baptism, and all its punishment remitted, yet man still lies under this necessity of suffering. It is no longer a punishment to such souls now restored to God's favour, without the reserve of any further debt to his justice; but it remains for their trial and as the means of their sanctification, salvation, and crown. What was first ordained for a punishment, by God's mercy changes its nature, and becomes a grace, an occasion of triumph and glory; but it still remains; man's destiny in this life is not changed; he is still a child of calamity and suffering, and "is filled with many miseries," Job xiv. 1. Thus, all men must suffer in this life from fears, anguish of mind, bodily necessities, pains, sicknesses, and death; from crosses and disappointments, from the treachery of friends, from the malice of enemies, from the inconstancy of fortune, and from innumerable unforeseen accidents lying in ambush suddenly to rush upon them from all sides. No place can afford a refuge, no station a protection from these evils. They, whom fortune seems to have raised above the level of other men, are but set up usually as marks for her to shoot her keenest darts against, or often to prepare a deeper pit for. Even they, who might sit content in the world, arm their passions against their own ease, or become a sort of frenetics, and afflict themselves by their own imagination for the merest trifles, or by empty, groundless fears, troubles, and fury. If any enjoy some interval of tranquillity, they are sure to meet with a check, and share, in their turn, in the common portion of mankind. Thus the sinner, the penitent, the innocent or just, all must suffer. Children announce this when born by beginning to weep as soon as to breathe. "The babe is born, and he immediately cries. He is the prophet of his misery. He cannot yet speak, but he prophesies," says St. Augustin, Serm. 26, de verb. ap. Did men consider this, it would be a great antidote against repining under afflictions. Let them reflect that their impatience and grief are unprofitable, and like arrows shot at no mark up into the sky, only to fall on their own heads and destroy them. In some, sensible losses something may be allowed to tender weak nature; but any

murmuring or excess in grief is passion, folly, and madness, Again, let them consider the misfortunes of many others, even saints, kings, and persons most deserving of felicity, yet far greater than theirs, whether in their estates, friends, families, or persons. The remembrance of miseries greater than theirs will make them look upon their own case still as a blessing. Let them but impartially compare their lot with that of Job, or of many within the circle of their own knowledge, (e. g.) who lost their lives, fortunes, reputation, &c., with circumstances still more grievous, and they will learn to bear their tribulation with moderation, and not exaggerate it to themselves as grief usually does. When the Persian emperor Darius Nothus was inconsolable at the loss of his favourite concubine, the philosopher Democritus exhausted his reason in vain to comfort him, till he promised to raise her to life again, in case the prince could name three men, who had ever lived without meeting with greater calamities; the emperor, not being able to find one, dried up his tears. Let men also remember the blessings still left them, as other goods, friends, liberty, life, &c. If God have taken some thing away, to show his sovereign dominion, and make them remember from whom they hold all the rest, they will see they have reason to thank him, and to rejoice that he gave them that so long, and still leaves them so many other comforts. If they answer, that what is lost seemed to them all, this evidently shows it was the idol of their inordinate passions, whether it was honour, a friend, &c., and that God deprived them of it in mercy, as an object abused by them to his dishonour and the great prejudice of their souls.

Crosses would be much lighter, if men expected them, and were prepared beforehand to receive them. Darts do not wound deep, which are foreseen. But we enhance, nay create our afflictions by our own faults and passions. Men look upon the expectation of sufferings as no comfortable prediction; thus they industriously banish that prospect from their minds; and, in spite of reason, experience, and religion, promise to themselves a kind of terrestrial paradise in this life, roses, and felicity; whereas, they ought continually to expect thorns, troubles, and disappointments, and be always laying in and increasing a stock of patience, which they will certainly have great need of in almost every step of their journey through this mortal life. By this preparation and expectation of crosses they will be prepared to meet them, and bear them with courage and cheerfulness, when they happen, and curbed by those thoughts will be in no danger of being fascinated or puffed up by prosperity, in the midst of which the lively remembrance of adversity waiting for its turn will be a restraint against all the sallies of the heart. Above all other means, men must consider afflictions in the light of faith, and in God, by whom they are sent in mercy and always for our good, for the expiation of sin, the purifying of our souls, as great means of virtue and our sanctification, and opportunities of the greatest crowns and victories. Thus they will appear even amiable and sweet. What the infidel and impenitent sinners suffer without fruit, may increase much by impatience; patience in the just makes sufferings light, nay delightful, and finds in them the greatest source of spiritual joy and advantages.

2. Temporal calamities, especially such as are general, are most frequently the punishment of sin. They may proceed from the malice of men, or from natural causes; but men are only God's instruments in them, and nature is his handmaid only to execute his orders. "Fire, hail, snow,

frost, the spirit of tempests which do his word." Ps. cxlviii. Not only the world perishing by the deluge, Sodom and Gomorrha consumed by fire, and the Canaanites cut off by the sword, but all the defeats, afflictions and misfortunes of the Jews, their cruel slavery under Salmanasar, Nabuchodonosor, and others; their persecution under Antiochus, and their last total subversion under the Romans; the sieges and destruction of Babylon, Ninive, Tyre, Sidon, and other cities and empires, were clearly the work of God punishing the sins of nations, as we see in the prophets; so are still the famines, plagues, earthquakes, and other scourges, that arise immediately from natural causes, and the falls of empires, which we ascribe to accidents or to the passions of ambitious men. We are not indeed to conclude, that nations so afflicted are always more wicked than others, which are spared; any more than those Galilæans, whose blood Pilot mingled with their sacrifices; or those eighteen persons, upon whom the tower fell in Siloe. Luke xiii. 4. God, by punishing some, gives warning to others; and his judgments are most grievous on those, whose punishment he reserves for the world to come. Here, he often chastises in his mercy his most faithful servants to crown them more gloriously. But, as his temporal scourges are chastisements of sin, we ought to receive them with submission in a spirit of compunction, and by penance and humiliation under them, to remove the cause from our hearts, and appease the divine justice. This is what he himself is pleased to teach us in the holy scriptures; and what the church directed by his spirit has always practised herself, and preached to her children.

Were God to treat us with rigour, we all deserve his severest scourges. The greatest temporal calamities are a much less evil than the least offence of God. All miseries, that can befal creatures, are light if compared to it. The overturning of thrones and empires is a less disorder in the universe, and to punish it God sometimes strikes the mighty, who are all but as dust in his sight, and destroys sovereigns and nations with the breath of his mouth, fills families with confusion, abandons kingdoms to wars, famines, or pestilences, smiting even the just with death, as we see in the case of Oza, and other terrible examples in scripture, "doubtless to show that no sin is small."[a] Did the prophets speak now as amongst the ancient Jews; did we penetrate now the secret mysteries of divine providence, how easily should we discover the causes,of our scourges to be our sins? How should we see the ruin of houses and states, public humiliations, and other dreadful calamities owing to secret vanities, such as those of David and Ezechias, and other sins? And how should we applaud herein the justice and sanctity of God?

3. Even for the sins of our life past, already remitted by repentance, a heavy satisfaction is often due, as we see in the case of David. His sin was pardoned him, yet God denounces to him: "The sword shall not depart from thy house." 2 Kings xii. 10. Nor could he by prayers or tears avert those grievous scourges. The like may hang over us for the sins of our youth. Ah! men sin, easily imagining that all will be over by a repentance; they swallow the sweet poison without concern, little thinking how dearly it will probably one day cost them, even if they find mercy; for the days of sorrow will come, in which they will feel its bitterness. God's pardon is indeed entire; but he pardons as a father, who wills not that his

[a] Absque dubio nihil leve æstimetur quo Deus læditur. Salvian, l. 6, de gubern. Dei.

children abuse his indulgence by returning easily to sin. "The punishment endures after the sin, lest the offence should seem small, if its punishment were all over with it," as St. Augustin says, Tr. 124 in Joan. If we are afflicted in our bodies or mind, if in our children, families, or friends, if in our estates and fortunes, if in the labour of our hands; and ask the reason, it is our sins. "If thou shalt say in thy heart, why have these things befallen me? for the multitude of thy iniquity." Jer. xiii. 22. "We suffer these things for our sins." 2 Mach. vii. 32. "Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment righteous." Ps. cxviii. 137. The brothers of Joseph, thirteen years after their sin, were thrown into chains. Then remembering their crime, they cry out: "We justly suffer these things, because we have sinned against our brother." Gen. xlii. 21. We in like manner ought to cry out under our affliction: "We justly suffer these things, because we have sinned." The end for which God visits us with his scourges is, that we may repent of all our sins, and satisfy his injured majesty. What then ought to be our behaviour under them? Doubtless to enter into the most perfect of penance, and by humiliations and prayer to labour to appease the divine justice. We are not to regard the scourge, but mount up to its cause, consider its source, and employ our tears to remove it; then we may hope to be mercifully freed from its just fruits. God cries out to us: "Banish evil from amongst you. Did not that happen to thee, because thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God? Thy wickedness shall arraign thee." Jer. ii. 17, 19.

We cry out under the lash; but if the rod cease to strike us, like the Jews, we return to our criminal courses. We weep then for our stripes, not for our sins. We neglect the only condition, which can move God to withdraw his avenging hand, that of sincere repentance, to move us to which he has struck us in mercy. It is thus he threatened the Jews, that he would forsake them till they fainted away, and should seek him. Osee, v. 15. "They sought him absent from them and angry, whom they had not regarded propitious and present to them." St. Jerom in c. 6, Osee.

4. God afflicts men sometimes for hidden sins, sometimes for the sins of others, in the same manner as he often shows some temporal mercy to children for their father's virtues, as he did to Solomon for David's sake. 3 Kings xi. 12. Hence, the Jews were taught to pray: "Remember the mercies of thy servant David." 2 Par. vi 42. And Moses: "Remember thy servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel." Exod. xxxii. 13. Thus, he sometimes extends not indeed the eternal, but the temporal chastisements of parents to their children: "I will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation." Num. xiv. 18. David's vanity cost the lives of 70,000 of his people. 2 Par. xxi. 14. Josue's army was defeated on account of the sin of Achan. Jos. vii. 5. Hence, the church prays: "Remember not our sins, nor those of our parents." But these punishments for the sins of others, unless we were imitators or partners in them, cannot be properly called punishments as they regard the innocent; being only designed for their advantage, and to be made by them the seeds of good works. See Ezech. xviii. 4.

Under the scourges of heaven we have recourse to holy ceremonies, and exterior practices of religion; but, "will holy victims take away from thy malice?" Jer. xi. 15. These must be accompanied with hearty repentance, as in the case of the Ninivites. "Let the man be converted from his evil

way, and from the iniquity, which is in his hands. Who knows if the Lord may be changed and forgive, and be turned from the fury of his wrath, and we shall not perish." Jon. iii. 8, 9. But our conversion must be perfect and lasting; a relapse would draw on more grievous judgments. Thus in sentiments of compunction and practices of penance we must labour to appease our offended God, as St. Gregory did in Rome, St. Charles in Milan, under a dreadful plague, till the striking angel may receive order to sheath his avenging sword. In the mean time, by patience, resignation, penance, and the exercise of charity and other virtues, we shall satisfy the divine justice, sanctify our souls, advance in the love of God, give him the greatest proofs of our love in the sacrifice of ourselves, and heap up the greatest treasure, in heaven.

Sidonius Apollinaris, a Gallican bishop, seeing Gaul laid waste by the Goths, under their barbarous king Evarix, writes on the ruins of his country, B. 7, ep. 6, p. 426. "I bear all evils with patience, because it is the order of providence, in the wise appointment of things, that the elect should here be struck with ulcers and poverty, with Lazarus to have their happiness in the world to come, not with the rich glutton here; and when I consider the punishments which I deserve, whatever adversities befal me seem too easy and too light. I also receive them cheerfully, as I know certainly, that it is the greatest remedy and advancement of the interior man, if the exterior be beaten on the floor of this world by many strokes." p. 428.

5. Tribulations are highly advantageous, not only because by them we expiate our sins, but still more because, they most strongly move us to sincere and perfect repentance of our sins, and disengage our affections from the love and dangers of the world. They make men seek God more earnestly, and enter into themselves by a perfect repentance. "I cried loud to the Lord when I was afflicted." Ps. cxix. "I found tribulation and sorrow, and I called upon the Lord." Ps. cxiv. 4. "In my tribulation I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God." Ps. xviii. 7. A certain secret self-sufficiency attends prosperity; adversity excites true repentance. What but tribulation is powerful enough to awaken the tepid, and to rouse the habitual sinner? It opened the eyes of the prodigal son, (Luke xv. 18,) of Nabuchodonosor, (Dan. iv. 26,) of Manasses in Babylon, (2 Par. xxxiii. 12,) of the Jews in their captivity, and on every other occasion. Isa. xxvi. 16, &c. Hence God pronounces of them: "In their tribulation they will arise early to me; Come, and let us return to the Lord. Osee. vi. 1. How will innumerable happy souls eternally extol holy tribulation, to which they are indebted for their conversion and salvation? singing to God: "Your rod and your staff have comforted me." Ps. xxii. 4. Our bodies under some disorders are not to be cured but by caustics and incisions; so it is with our souls. Tribulations are those caustics, those painful but necessary incisions, which give us a true feeling of our extreme indigence and miseries.

Worldly prosperity is exceedingly dangerous to a soul, and brings with it great obstacles to salvation. A christian must have his heart in heaven, where his treasure and inheritance is; he is a man of the other world, a child of promises, in which is all his hope and comfort; he is a stranger and pilgrim on earth. Now, prosperity links him to this world, and fetters his affections by attachments and love of sensible objects, in which he finds a constant enjoyment and series of pleasure, which is a kind of

fascination, binding and enchanting him. An unjust love of the world hence fills his soul, which nevertheless he does not perceive. He becomes fixed in this habitual disorder and state of sin, yet is insensible of it.

Besides this attachment to the earth, prosperity produces an excessive love of ourselves. Faith teaches us to hate ourselves, to mortify our inclinations and senses. But, this inordinate self-love makes us seek ourselves in all things; (i. e.) study always to please ourselves, gratify our will, and flatter our senses; it would make us the centre of all creatures round about us, and have nothing to be, nor to move but for us. Hence, all who approach us, must be attentive to our desires, inclinations, and passions, to accommodate themselves to them, because they can insinuate themselves into our good will only by this base artifice. Is not this for a man to make himself his divinity, to live almost only for himself, to refer every thing to himself, to limit his affections, his desires, his fears, his hopes within himself? Hence, Christ pronounces such woes upon those, who have their consolation in this world.

Thirdly, prosperity puffs up the mind. Pride is that inclination, which our corrupt hearts are most susceptible of. It is hard even under humiliations to divest ourselves of it; but in temporal felicity it becomes quite insurmountable. It breeds a certain secret idea of vanity, and a false idea of a man's self, by which he regards himself as something, and confounds their exterior gifts, which are not himself, with himself, and forms an imaginary phantom of grandeur, which he takes for himself. The ridicule attendant on haughtiness makes him avoid that fault, and show himself affable and free to other men; but he nevertheless looks upon himself in his heart as a privileged person, raised above others, and really as something. "They are not in the labour of men, therefore, pride has seized them." Ps. lxxii. 5, 6. Every thing about them fortifies this criminal impression; titles, rank, applause of men, The very ministers of the altars praising their lightest virtues, under pretence of animating those weak beginnings of piety, corrupt their source, and make them lose their merit: not but that worldly prosperity may be a gift of God to some faithful servants. But, they must always carefully remember, that providence bestows worldly advantages only to afford occasions of virtue, by despising them, and by using them in charity to relieve others by them; that a christian's only greatness is his innocence and virtue, and that a sinner is the last and most wretched of creatures; that God will exact an account to the last farthing; that temporal favours are very dangerous; and a continual chain of them so great a danger, that no saint could ever support himself under it. Therefore, intervals of crosses and misfortunes are most wholesome, and absolutely necessary.

St. Chrysostom remarks, (Hom. 8, in Mat.) that St. Joseph was first disturbed on seeing Mary with child. He was afterwards comforted by an angel, and by the birth of the child, who, the angels assured him, was to save his people. Immediately the fear of Herod's persecution, the joyful adoration of the Magi, the flight into a foreign land in great distress, successively follow one another. Thus, God intermingles comforts with sorrow, interweaves the lives of all his just with an admirable variety of prosperities and adversities, and suffers neither to be perpetual. Thus, does he remove them from the dangers of both. "In the day of good things be not unmindful of evils: and, in the day of evils, be not unmindful of good things: because, it is easy, before God, in the day of

death, to reward every one according to his ways." Eccl. xi. 27, 28. If providence send continually the utmost temporal losses and afflictions, remember that it is a happiness to lose what it is not lawful to love. Prosperity always sails amidst rocks, and meets with dangers at every step. It is to many the heaviest of God's judgments and his most terrible curse. Whence, St. Anthony of Padua said: "There is no more evident sign of eternal damnation than a continued course of temporal success." Serm. Dom. 12, post Pent. fol. 246. "These," says Minutius Felix, a learned ancient father, (Octav.) "are like victims fattened for slaughter, crowned to be sacrificed." This is that severe punishment, which God often inflicts on the wicked, whom he abandons to their own passions and blindness; of which he says: "Let us show mercy to the wicked man," viz., in temporal prosperity, "and he will not learn justice." Isa. xxvi. 10. Upon which words St. Bernard exclaims: "This temporal mercy of God is more cruel than all indignation. Remove far from me that indulgence, excluding me from the paths of justice, O Father of mercies." Serm. 42, in Cant.

Add, that, though adversity requires fortitude, and has its difficulties and dangers to be borne well, prosperity is always far more dangerous, as it is much harder for a man to command and govern his heart under it. Prosperity no sooner blows fair, than all that is light and empty in the soul is carried up by it. It stupifies men. Upon its least smiles they grow elate and scarcely know themselves. Hence, they often create their own miseries. Also, after a man has been accustomed to a series of success, and been delighted by it, he will be no ways able to bear reverse of fortune, which, even should he equal the fortunate Polycrates, king of the Samians, he will be sure to meet with, and that soon. Hence, bishop Leslie, in his book of consolation to Mary queen of the Scots, then in prison, commends that wise saying of queen Catharine, the wife of king Henry VIII. that, were it her part to choose, she would prefer a moderate fortune; but of the two, rather the most severe, than a constant gale of success; for no affliction was without its comfort; but continual prosperity always deprived men of their reason.[a] Faith sets this in the clearest light, showing that in prosperity passions are forfeited, instead of being subdued, and sins not retrenched, but multiplied, and their punishment reserved for a most rigorous hereafter; so, that to pass this life without punishment would be the most dreadful punishment, and effect of God's greatest indignation.

6. Tribulation not only removes the great dangers of a flattering worldly prosperity, but brings also the highest spiritual advantages.

First, It humbles us and gives a true knowledge of ourselves and our own weakness, which is the true foundation of all virtue.

Secondly, It makes us fly to God with the greatest fervour, as sailors in a storm. It is then that we offer to God the purest and most acceptable prayers, and that his ears are more open to hear us, as St. Chrysostom observes, in Ps. cxix. p. 329, t. 5.

Thirdly, It makes us truly and sincerely love and raise all our desires towards our heavenly country, and seek no comfort but in our assured hope of that ever blessed union with God in his kingdom of glory.

Fourthly, We learn by it that riches, men, &c. are not to be trusted in,

[a] Quem res plus nimio delectavere secundæ
Mutatæ quatiunt.—Hor. l. 1, ep. 10.

and cannot assist us. It weans our hearts from the love of this world. The more perfectly we die to ourselves and to creatures, in the same proportion will our love of God be more pure and perfect, as this love of ourselves and of creatures is its grand obstacle and capital enemy in our hearts. The more this is subdued, the more abundantly is grace bestowed. Hence, the life of a true servant of God must be a continual martyrdom, full of outward bitterness and severity to nature, though inwardly full of joy and sweetness in God. Temporal afflictions contribute more to consummate this martyrdom than all interior or exterior mortifications can do, in which our own choice has a share, and under which, something of self-love may always lurk. Hence, Almighty God always manages opportunities of such sufferings in favour of his special servants, to procure them this perfect victory over themselves, and this necessary crucifixion of self-love in their hearts. It is impossible we should ever die to ourselves totally, but by being bruised in the mortar of tribulation. By exterior afflictions, patiently borne, we banish from our affections all love of the world; we learn and feel its emptiness, folly, and falsehood, and that it will not, or cannot help us. "Evils abound in the world, that it may not be loved," says St. Augustin, (Serm. lxxx.) "that the present life may grow bitter to thee, and that thou desire that to come." En. in Ps. cxlviii. But interior trials are more severe and bitter, consequently, of great merit; and these are of the highest advantage, as they tend powerfully to extirpate self-love, striking directly at its very root. We are sick of this spiritual disease. It is only by suffering, that our health is to be recovered. This life is only for a time of trial and temptation. We live only to suffer. "We are appointed thereunto," says the apostle, 2 Thess. It is time we should leave this world, when we have no more to suffer. A patient must quit the hospital as soon as he is well.

7. God is most with us in suffering. The apostles in the storm thought they were perishing, and Jesus slept; Mat. viii. but he was with them all the while. He would try their confidence in him, and make them earnestly cry to him. This happens daily under our eyes. God seems to abandon our souls. Temptations and afflictions seem to overwhelm us. It is so, because, God knows the remedy we stand in need of; but he is ready and near us. A mother runs to attend a child suffering: so God to our cries. Tribulation makes us nearer and dearer to him, as it removes the hurry and obstacles of creatures, and places us in a state of suffering and of crucifixion, resembling his divine Son, and endearing us to his goodness. Hence, he then more readily hears our prayers, and more abundantly bestows his greatest graces, which are only to be gathered under mount Calvary. The prosperous world is full and self-sufficient; the poor and patient suffering christian is ordinarily best disposed for spiritual graces. We may seek God where we please; but we shall find him no where so perfectly on earth as by humiliations and crosses, "With him I am in tribulation: I will deliver him and glorify him." Ps. xc. 15. "Our Lord is nigh to them, that are of a contrite heart." Ps. xxxii. 19. God communicates himself to none, except to those who depend on him.

It furnishes occasions of exercising the most heroic virtues, especially self denial, the crucifixion of all our passions, the gaining of a complete victory over ourselves, patience, confidence in God, love of God, and the sacrifice of our will and our whole selves to God. For it is an act the most agreeable to God, and a perfect holocaust of ourselves, which we

offer to him by bearing patiently afflictions for his sake. By this we acknowledge the supreme dominion of him, from whom we received all things, and to which we subject ourselves; we offer to him our goods by bearing the loss of them for his honour; our bodies with their organs, senses, and enjoyments, by receiving patiently all bodily pains; our will and souls by the anguish and privations, which they endure. Is not this a total holocaust of all we have made to God by a voluntary destruction of it? It is also an extirpation of our spiritual enemies, and a consuming of their very arms and instruments of malice. It is giving God the greatest proof of our fidelity and love. An ancient father considering this cried out: "O how beautiful a spectacle is it in the eyes of God, when a christian sustains a combat with pain."[a] Minutius Felix, Octav. He valiantly triumphs over all the fury of Satan and hell, and courageously bears all the assaults of losses, grief, and pain, without suffering his mind to be injured by them. How much greater is this victory than the earthly triumphs of a Cæsar or an Alexander, by which they only cruelly oppressed their fellow-creatures, and were themselves the greatest slaves to their own passions? This is truly a great triumph in the eyes of God, who beholds attentively this great spectacle, together with all the innumerable legions of his heavenly court, and already holds the eternal crown over the head of the immortal conqueror.

It is the necessary trial of all virtue, purging it from all dross and rust of what might be human in it or its intention. "God tried them and found them worthy of himself. He proved them as gold in the furnace, and made them acceptable as the victim of holocaust." Wisd. iii. 5, 6. "Gold and silver are tried in the fire; but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation." Eccl. 5. "Because thou wert acceptable to God, it was necessary that tribulation should try thee." Tob. xii. 13. "The elect bring forth fruit only in patience." Luke viii. 15. A man may appear humble, meek, patient, and adorned with all virtues, so long as he is not put to the test: but let him meet with crosses, humiliations, contradictions, &c. these will try and show what he really is.

8. It merits heaven. To what does God promise his kingdom? To worldly pleasures, riches, or ease? So one might imagine, when we see how christians seek and delight in such things. But no. Faith teaches us, that nothing is more dangerous, nothing a greater sign of reprobation, than a continual series of worldly delights. The rich glutton enjoyed them; but he broils now in hell, because he had his consolation here. "Was this the cause of his torments? yes, the whole cause," cries out St. Bernard. Heaven is a kingdom of conquest; it must be taken by storm: it must cost fatigue and pains. It was purchased for us by the cross; nor can we enter it but through sufferings. This is the condition, under which it is offered to us. Who can expect a triumph without fighting, a salary without labour, a prize without striving for it? Our very title to the kingdom of God is grounded only on our suffering for it. Christ as a man entered it by no other path. "He was to suffer to enter into his glory." Luke xxiv. 26. It is open to us by no other path than by following our head and leader. It is necessary, that we also should enter the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations. A christian looks for rest, and a paradise to come, not in this present life. This is the time of

[a] Quam pulchrum spectaculum Deo, cum christianus cum dolore congreditur!

trial, not of enjoyment. "Why do you demand a crown before you have conquered? Why do you think of feasting before the end of your race? Behold the bye-standers have their eyes fixed upon you; the champions stand yet in the field; and do you ask for repose before your time?" St. Ambrose, offic. l. 1, c. 16. To be united to Jesus in glory we must here share in his sufferings. Let us not seek to enjoy before God's appointed time. Eternity is long enough for enjoyment.

The portions of suffering indeed are different; but the recompense above all bounds is proportioned to them. Did we raise our eyes to heaven, we should rejoice in tribulation as momentary and light.

Let us set the smallness of the affliction against the weight of glory, and the transitory fleetness of the one against the external stability of the other. A bliss eternal; without interruption, without conclusion; liable to no decays of nature, no wastings of time; nothing without to destroy it, nothing within to diminish or impair it. "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." Mat. v. 12. "If labour and sweat were not joined to virtue, what recompense would it deserve?" says St. Maximus the martyr, Serm. 70, t. 2, p. 688.

Oh! did a soul know how much she honours God in suffering with patience; did she know the treasures of merit, which she heaps up every moment of this martyrdom, she would never be willing to change her tears for any other state. The time of consolation is sweeter to her; but it is in patience that she merits more, that she labours, that she fights, that she makes to God the most agreeable sacrifices. Could she but here comprehend the happiness of suffering for God; if, illuminated by the purest lights of faith, she saw all its advantages, she would prefer it to all, that is most agreeable in the world, and pronounce the cross more glorious than diadems, and St. Lewis more happy and greater under it than he could be have been in the conquest of the East, and even in subduing it to the law of Christ.

9. By suffering we resemble Christ, and bear his image on earth. Members must correspond with their head. Jesus is the model, according to which we are to be formed. He is our example. As he bore his cross, so, he commands us to carry ours after him. Mat. xvi. 24. Luke xiv. 27. He suffered not that we might live in delights, "but to leave us an example how we ought to follow his steps." 1 Pet. ii. 21. He offered himself to all tribulation whatsoever his Father should be pleased to lay upon him. "Behold, I come—to do thy will." Heb. x. 6. He passed his whole life in poverty, pains, and labours from his youth. Ps. lxxxvii. 16. He longed to be satiated with afflictions, and bathed in the baptism of his sufferings. Luke xii. 50. He went out to meet his executioners, and voluntarily delivered himself into their hands. "Now the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord." Mat. x. 24, as he himself tells us. "Those, whom God has called, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son." Rom. viii. 29. "If we be dead with him, we shall live also with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12, "We are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; yet so if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him." Rom. viii. 17.

Can we appear agreeable before God in any other than the red livery, which his Son put on? This is certainly the most pleasing to him. Those, who attend on the great ones of the world, appear so clad and in

such equipage as to do honour to their master, not in rags or in a disorderly manner so as to be a disgrace to him; thus must they, who desire to be the attendants of Christ, be clad in such a manner as to do him honour, and to please him; consequently covered with poverty, abjection, contempt, and sufferings, at least in spirit; for it is in this that he places the beauty of his train as well as of his person. If his servants appeared in riches, grandeur, honours, and pleasures, so as to be delighted with them, like the servants of the world, they would do an injury to their divine master, thus bearing the livery of his enemy, as a great servant of God writes:[a] "Let us go forth therefore to him without the camp bearing his reproach;" (i. e.) his cross. Heb. xiii. 13.

10. Christ has foretold to us, that we must suffer, if we belong to him; therefore, we are not to be dejected or scandalized at it. He tells us: "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." John xv. 20. "You shall be hated by all men for my sake." Mat. x. 22. "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Mat. v. 10. If then, we are persecuted, reviled, and calumniated even by persons supposed to be virtuous: if we suffer in goods, or in body and health, we must remember, that this is the christian's portion and happiness. The prince of the apostles tells us: "You are called unto this." 1 Pet. ii. 21. "If you suffer any thing for justice sake, blessed are ye." 1 Pet. iii. 14, "All, that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. iii. 12. "That no man should be moved in these tribulations; for yourselves know, that we are appointed thereunto." 1 Thess. iii. 3. A worldly spirit understands not this mystery of the cross, nor how precious it is in the eyes of God; it seems to such, a folly and a scandal; 1 Cor. i. 23, but to those, that are called, it appears as it is, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Hence, when St. Peter, before he was filled with the perfect spirit of God, opposed our Saviour's passion, Christ severely reproved him, and called him an adversary, or Satan, saying: "Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto me; because, thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." Mat. xvi. 23.

Those, whom God predestinates to his more extraordinary graces, he always purges by severer trials. Hence, when the two sons of Zebedee desired a high place in his kingdom, he asked them if they could drink of his cup of sufferings with him. Mat. xx. 22. And to express the future merits, to which he would raise St. Paul, he mentions the great sufferings to which he called him. "This man is to me a vessel of election; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Acts ix. 16. If he promise a hundred fold of comforts in this life to his true followers, this is joined with persecutions. Mark x. 30.

"Whom the Lord loves he will chastise." Prov. iii. 12. "He who spares the rod hates his son." Prov. xiii. 24. "The Lord scourgeth every son, whom he receiveth. Persevere under discipline. God dealeth with you as with his sons; for what son is there, whom the father doth not correct? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are made partakers: then are you bastards, and not sons." Heb. xii. 7, 8. "These thou hast tried as a father admonishing them; but those thou hast condemned as a hard king." Wisd. xi. 11. "He deals not with us

[a] De Bernieres, l. 1, c. 13, t. 2.

as with other nations, whom he patiently expects, that, when the day of judgment shall come, he may punish them in the fulness of their sins." 2 Mac. vi. 14. Upon which lessons of the divine wisdom St. Augustin writes, (En. 2, in Ps. 31.) "Do not hope to be without a scourge, unless you think of being disinherited. He scourges every son, whom he receives. What every one? Where then would you hide yourself? Every one; and not one is excepted; not one will be without a scourge; even the only one without sin yet is not without a scourge." And in another place, in Ps. 36. "See what he bore for you, who had no cause of suffering. How much soever you undergo, you will not come up to his insults, his thorny crown, his ignominious garments and cross."

11. Suffering therefore is the true christian's joy. "Rejoice under scourges; because the inheritance is preserved for you. Choose for yourself temporal labour or eternal torment, whichever you prefer," says St. Augustin in Ps. 93. Tribulation is the pledge of our happiness. "Count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations." James i. 2. The apostles, having been scourged by the Jews, "went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." Acts v. 41. St. Paul testifies: "I am filled with comfort; I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation." 2 Cor. vii. 4. "I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ." 2 Cor. xii. 10.

It is his glory. Thus "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians." Heb. xi. 26. St. Peter tells his suffering flock; "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed; for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God and that which is his spirit, resteth upon you." 1 Pet. iv. 14. And St. Paul thus congratulates his dear Philippians: "Unto you it is given for Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him." Phil. i. 24. As to himself he says; "We glory in tribulations." Rom. v. 13. St. Chrysostom, (Hom. 16, ad Pop. Ant. p. 160) observes, that St. Paul every where glories in his sufferings, never in his graces or miracles, and that labour and crowns, tribulations and pardon go every where together. He observes, that this apostle stiles himself the prisoner for Christ, glorying in this title more than in all other gifts, more than in the highest earthly dignities and honours. For to suffer for God is of all things we can do, or receive in this world, the most high and the most safe. It is a blessing, which God imparts to his beloved children and friends. As souls are dearer to him, he usually gives them a greater share herein.

"Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ," says he, (Eph. iii. 1,) upon which words St. Chrysostom writes thus: Hom. 8, in Ephes. "It is a more illustrious title to be a prisoner for Christ, than to be either an apostle, or a doctor, or an evangelist. This is a great dignity, and greater than any kingdom or consulship. He, who loves Christ, would rather be in chains for him than dwell in heaven. No glittering crown adorns a head so much as a chain borne for Christ. If one had given me the choice of all heaven or of this chain, I should take the chain. If I might have stood with the angels above near the throne of God, or bound with Paul, I should have preferred the prison. Nothing is more happy than this chain. I do not pronounce Paul so happy, because he was taken up in a rapture into paradise, as that he bore this chain. Had you rather have been the angel loosing Peter in chains, I had rather have been Peter. This gift of

chains is something greater than to stop the sun, to move the world, or to command the devils." Hom. 8, in Ephes.

12. If I consider all the saints from Abel downwards, I shall find they all met with persecutions and afflictions; all walked in the high road of the cross. It was by this path that the graces of God descended to them, and through it they all mounted up to God; for this is the road leading to the city of the King of kings, opened to men by our crucified Saviour. All the holy patriarchs, prophets, and ancient saints walked in it with Abraham, Moses, Job, Tobias, David, Elias, &c. as St. Paul sums them up. Heb. xi. "Others were racked; others had trials of mockeries and stripes, of bands and prisons; they were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheep skins, in goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted; of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, in dens, and in caves of the earth."

The King of all the saints, he who is the way and the life, the model of all the souls that shall be saved, ran in this path as a giant in labours, contumelies, pains, and torments, from the first moment of his conception to his last breath on the cross. He had chosen suffering for his inseparable and beloved spouse, and lived and died in its closest embraces. In this same way all the great troop of the saints follow him, every one bearing his cross, generally the greater as they are nearer and dearer to him. At their head walked his glorious mother bearing in her devout soul all the pains and anguishes, which he felt; St John the Evangelist his favourite disciple, St. Peter, the other apostles, martyrs, virgins, and confessors faithfully accompanied him; all were made his friends only through many trials. These now make up the radiant jewels of their immortal crowns. For any one to appear in this blessed company, not resembling the rest, would be a monster in paradise. It is absolutely necessary, that all enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations. He, who would pretend to find another path, would go without a guide, would fall into the hands of robbers and murderers in the way, or wander astray and perish in precipices and pit-falls, which the paths of worldly pleasures and delights are filled with.

The carnal wisdom of worldly pride and sensuality, as it is an enemy of the cross, can never understand this heavenly doctrine. It cries out: Can God, who is all goodness, delight in the sufferings of a creature? His pleasure indeed is to make his dear creatures happy. His first design was to have made man so by paths of pure and holy delights; but since he has lost himself, and is become sick, he is to be restored by bitter means, by graces derived from the sufferings of our crucified God, and applied to our souls by our own sufferings. For, innocence itself, our Lord, King, and God did not undergo so much, that the rebellious creature and sinner should be saved without drinking of the same cup after him. It is just, and by the holy order of providence it is necessary, that we also should suffer, first, to satisfy for our own sins; secondly, to purify us from our daily imperfections; thirdly, to overcome self-love and our passions; fourthly, to make us members conformable and proportioned to our head; lastly, to enrich us with his graces and crown us with his glory. Does not a parent love his son, when he prescribes him a bitter portion in his sickness? or a king some favourite nobleman, when he sends him to the wars only to procure him the honour and advantages of a triumph? But,

who are we, to dispute the wisdom and mercy of God in his choice of the means to save us? We are not indeed to make or choose our own crosses. That would be presumption, and against the order of providence. It is our duty to receive from God, and to bear those, which he shall be pleased to lay upon us for our good.

13. Suffering also with patience is the most heroic act of divine love. Martyrdom is its most perfect act, as Christ himself declares. All are not called to a trial of blood; but every one is called to give a proof of his love and fidelity by suffering, which may be its test and a kind of martyrdom. What love is that, which does or suffers nothing for its beloved? True love ever burns to be acting; feels no greater pleasure than to find an occasion of giving proof of itself; the more difficult or painful it is, the greater proof will it appear to be; the heart therefore seizes it with greater ardour and delight.

He, who knows the riches of true love, knows also those of the cross, its inseparable companion; for he is sensible that, if he refuse to suffer, he can never vanquish self-love within himself, but must ever be rotting in its dunghill, and never obtain the pure love of God, He also knows, that sufferings are the fuel of divine love, by which it is most inflamed; and likewise its trial and test, and the most perfect sacrifice of itself, that it is capable of offering. Hence, all true lovers of God are lovers of his cross. Love pants after it as fire requires fuel to enkindle, nourish, and inflame itself more and more. See how the fire, which burned in the breast of St. Ignatius of Antioch, thus thirsted to find a fuel suitable to it; to be restrained, not to be permitted to act and break out and dilate itself beyond measure, was to it a constraint quite intolerable, and as it were a torment. It wanted wild beasts, racks, fires, breaking of bones, all the greatest torments to refresh and comfort it. The martyr trembled lest he should lose the hope of dying for Christ. To labour to promote the kingdom of divine love in the hearts of other men, and to cultivate it in his own by ardent prayer and virtue, had till then been objects of his desires, and a continual fuel to his flame; but at length the expectation of martyrdom made him recommend the soul of others to God, and his flock to St. Polycarp, and to forget every other means of labouring to satisfy his ardour. He saw himself called to the cross, and to sacrifice himself entirely to enjoy his God speedily by laying down his life for his honour; therefore, he could contain himself no longer, but abandoned himself entirely to this zeal for suffering. "I write to you," says he in his seraphic letter to the Romans, "seized with the love of dying. There is not in me a fire-loving water. If any one possess my God in himself, let him understand what I desire and pity me. Let him, from what he feels boiling in his breast, judge from his own experience what my pain is, and say there is no other means to satiate the fire, that devours me, except that I be ground to powder by the teeth of the beasts, and so made a bread fit for my master's table. In vain would any pretend to comfort me by preventing my martyrdom, through interest, or intercessions with the emperor, and giving me to hope some other way of testifying my love for Jesus Christ. Such a consolation is but water, and agrees not with that fire, which consumes me, and which will admit no allay or mitigation."

We owe to God a gratuitous love; not for rewards, &c., but as he has loved us gratis. How do you know that ours is such, except by tribulation? If we love, we accordingly desire to give God proofs of it by trials.

"Prove me, O Lord, and try me." Ps. xxv. 2. Earthly prosperity would make our love mercenary.

Have I any spark of this true love in my breast, who am so impatient under the least trials? who am discomposed at a look, a word, a tone of the voice, or the least contradiction or cross.

DISCOURSE LXIV.

ON TEMPORAL AFFLICTIONS IN PARTICULAR.

1. MAN may suffer by as many different sorts of crosses as he has faculties, powers, and passions in his soul, senses and members in his body, and objects either spiritual or corporal out of himself, by which he may feel any pain or affliction in mind or body.

"We fall not into afflictions, because, God is either unable or unwilling to help us, since he is both the sovereign of the world, and the lover of his servants. But he tries and examines us by adversity, and makes calamities the touchstone of our virtue, and proves the will of man to the last extremity, even unto death, well knowing that nothing can be lost to him. Therefore, we are no otherwise tried by afflictions than gold is purified by the fire. How fair a spectacle in the sight of God is a christian entering the lists with affliction, and with a noble firmness braving and encountering menaces and torments?" Min. Felix in Octavio.

As to temporal goods, we must always remember they are most fickle and uncertain, sometimes in the possession of one, sometimes of another, as a bird perching one hour in our garden, and the next in a neighbour's; nor are they any more to be depended upon. Ever to count upon what is so inconstant, or regard it as properly ours, is unreasonable and pernicious to our souls. We came naked into this world; if God has favoured us with more than subsistence from day to day, it is what above half the world has not, and to which we had no previous title preferably to them; this distinction has been the pure gift of God, whether crowning our industry with this blessing, or granting it to our birth. If the same sovereign Lord be pleased now to take it even all away, we have still reason to thank him for the past enjoyment, and also for this, that now in his mercy, and out of no less goodness to us, he has been pleased to deprive us of it, saying with Job: "I came naked out of my mother's womb, and I shall return thither naked; the Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; as it has pleased the Lord, so it is done; be the name of the Lord blessed." Job i. 21. "If we have received good things from the hand of God, why should we not also receive evil?" Job ii. 10. Has not God yet left us more temporal resources than to many thousands? If it be his will, that we should even perish by starving and hunger, it is what has befallen several great and good men. Belisarius, the conqueror of those nations, which had overthrown the Roman empire, is said by some to have at last begged farthings from door to door. St. Teresa used to say, if it were God's will we should even die of hunger, why should we fear to leave the world that way more than any other? as die we must. "Although he shall kill me, I will hope

in him." Job xiii. 15. But he, who strikes, can as easily restore again, as he did to Job, whensoever he shall see it good.

We must likewise reflect, that the goods of this life are no real goods, except, as they may be conducive to our salvation; otherwise they are evils, extremely pernicious to our souls. If we grieve immoderately at their loss, it is certain our hearts were too much wedded to them. If God remove these idols, it is to destroy the idolatry of our souls, and raise our affections to himself; it is for a trial of our love, and to furnish us with occasions of greater crowns. If we patiently submit to this cross, we make to God a ready and cheerful sacrifice of our earthly substance, and this in the most perfect manner, and as he requires it from our hands. In this spirit the primitive christians rejoiced in such losses, commending their children and friends to the fatherly providence of God, of whom St. Paul could say: "You received with joy the plunder of your goods, knowing that you have a better and a lasting substance." Heb. x. 34.

2. The loss of honour or reputation is to many a severe trial; and it must be confessed, that it disqualifies a person for the world, and deprives him of many comforts and advantages in social life. But, if we consider it truly, how trivial a thing is worldly honour in itself, a mere empty bubble, a nothing? If it dazzle in the eyes of a foolish mob; if it draw huzzas, flatteries, and cringes; these are usually only forced, and do not proceed from true esteem or affection; those who pay them often conceive, at the same time, the greatest sentiments of scorn for their persons in their hearts, could these but be penetrated. If they are sincere, which will seldom be known, still what are they? something exterior to the man, giving him no true merit, and even most inconstant in themselves, vain and little as they are; so that no man can ever enjoy a moment's solid peace of mind in them for fear of losing them; they must perpetually rack and disturb him in the midst of his foolish enjoyment. But as to the soul, and a man's true good and virtue, honour is very dangerous, and generally most pernicious: for, if a man do not find any titillation of delight in it, it must be a grievous slavery and burden; if he be pleased with it, he becomes a prey to ambition and worldly pride. And how is it possible he should live in honour, without being insensibly infected with this vice? Herod Agrippa could listen to the acclamation, that he was a God who spoke, (Acts xii. 22;) and, though he doubtless never believed so gross and monstrous an absurdity, the applause tickled and inwardly swelled his heart. Indeed, all earthly honour is the grand incentive of pride, and it is easier to touch pitch and not be defiled by it, than for the corruption of the human heart not to be secretly tainted in honour. Only an extraordinary grace can maintain humility under it. This, alas, how few labour to obtain!

The more ordinary course of divine providence is to lead souls to humility and grace by removing them from this dangerous rock, and conducting them through the ways of humiliations and crosses. Christ chose them himself; declared our happiness to consist in them; and proposed them for the object of his disciples' holy ambition. Every Christian is bound, at least, not to please himself in worldly honour. Can he then grieve to see himself deprived of it? The designs of the divine mercy and of his spiritual advantages are too evident in this worldly loss, not to be at least an over-balance in his mind, and hinder him from looking upon it as a cross.

As to a good reputation, it may be serviceable and seem even necessary to promote God's honour; nor ought any man to prostitute it by infamous actions. Yet a love or fondness of it is ever criminal, and most fatal to the soul; for nothing is more secure or advantageous to her virtue than humiliations. According to the judgment of carnal wisdom, never was reputation more necessary than in our great Redeemer; yet, he chose a hidden life for above thirty years, and, after many humiliations during his divine mission, closed it by his ignominious passion and death. Is not this sufficient to show us, that it is by the ignominy of the cross his glory is to be truly propagated, as well as virtue cultivated in our own souls? If then he be pleased to deprive us of our reputation, ought we not to embrace this trial as a great mercy? As to the necessity of a good name, for temporal or spiritual good ends, ought we not to leave it to God to execute his work by the means his wisdom chooses, and receive his most wholesome grace with resignation, and even joy and thanksgiving? We can do nothing so much to promote God's honour, and enlarge his grace in our souls, as to become crucified to the world in our hearts, and, that it be crucified to us; and, that we arrive at the strictest union with our blessed Redeemer, who, from his birth in the manger, to his death on the cross, met with a perpetual contradiction from the world, to show us that we must be entirely dead to all sentiments of its honour, for his grace to triumph in our souls. And when we meditate on the life of Christ, are we not obliged to cry out with St. Teresa; "Is it possible that I should desire any one should entertain a good opinion of me, since I see you, my God, so treated on earth?" We must learn, that the world and all things out of God are nothing, and that he alone is all. This sentiment must be practically engraven on our hearts. This is the touchstone of the pure love of God, which can be acquired only by the tribulation of the world.

3. We seem surprized to meet with calumnies and persecutions from men; to see ourselves condemned or suspected of things, from which, of all persons living, we are the most remote; to find perhaps, nothing but contradictions from all quarters, the good as well as the bad tearing our good names to pieces by slander, putting sinister interpretations upon our most innocent intentions and actions, and making it a point of zeal to defeat all our designs, and cross and thwart all our measures and undertakings. Why? was not this the case of our divine master? He was, as it were, set up for a butt or mark to be contradicted. "The disciple is not above his master." He has foretold, that all, who follow him, shall meet with the same treatment. If we were of the world, it would love us as its own, and would even fight for us and defend us. It persecutes us, because, we are opposite to its maxims and ways. As we are Christ's, we must expect to be treated by it as its enemies, and it is our happiness, our crown, our security and preservation, that we should be so. Were not all the apostles thus treated by it? Were not the primitive christians! What cruel and bloody persecutions did they not undergo? What scorn, what calumnies were they attacked by, notwithstanding the innocence, purity and sanctity of their lives? They were accused of eating child's flesh in their holy mysteries in the blessed eucharist; of adoring an ass; nay of infamous lusts. Tert. apolog. &c.

The church grew under these trials, and was filled with saints and martyrs. St. Cyprian observed that, if the persecutions ceased but for a short interval, many fell from the spirit of the gospel. Peace from the

world, sloth, ease, and some earthly enjoyments, enamoured some with this life, and injured virtue more than the sword could do; for the spirit of religion flourishes most amidst persecutions. It is a flower that grows best among the pricking thorns. The rage of bloody persecutions is over; the world is become christian: but, as St. Augustin asks, (in Ps. lxix. p. 2,) "is the devil also become christian?" As long as he reigns prince of this world, God will permit him, in one shape or other, to persecute his servants, and this for their good. Hence, Christ gives them this participation of his cross for their portion and inheritance, sweetened indeed and made light by his inward peace and consolations, and by the unction of his grace. The character of a christian and that of the world differ chiefly in this point: "Amen, Amen, I say unto you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrows shall be turned into joy." John xvi. 20. "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake." Mat. v. 11.

4. The persecution, which the servants of God meet with from the wicked, who are not able to bear the light of their example, is something grand and honourable, and so, not altogether contrary to human nature; or at least, it is what virtue always expects. But, that is more severe to self-love, is more difficult and more meritorious to be borne in silence, which they receive from good men either mistaken, or misled in their regard, so that they think it a part of zeal and merit before God to oppose them, often with violence. This persecution is sometimes really moved by passion, acting under the colour of zeal. This kind of suffering is a total crucifixion of self-love in all its shapes; and, as it is usually more severe, so patience and silence under it, is the more meritorious and advantageous. See remarkable examples of this, in the lives of St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and of innumerable other eminent saints. The true servant of God, Henry Mary Boudon, Archdeacon and Grand Vicar of Evreux, for his extraordinary sanctity and zealous missions was highly esteemed by his bishop, the queen of France, &c. but happening by his zeal to have offended some false brethren, a storm broke out against him; his bishop interdicted him upon false accusations, which he bore in silence; preachers declaimed against him from the pulpit, whom he bid to have no scruple for any thing they said against him, and assisted himself at their invectives; abandoned and persecuted by all, driven from Evreux, he lay sick in a garret in Paris for two days without any thing to eat; and suffered much more, before his innocence was publicly acknowledged, always joyful. The most sensible persecutions are those, which we meet with from our dearest friends, in whom we ought to find a comfort and a refuge. This circumstance drew the most bitter complaints from David, and from our Redeemer himself, by the mouth of the prophets. Pious souls, that received other trials with joy, found it a sensible stroke to see themselves rejected even by their spiritual friends; yet a christian, whose life consists in the spirit and in grace, finds the greatest advantages in the most rigorous privations and sufferings of nature. The more he is abandoned by creatures, the more is the very root of earthly affections and consolations extirpated out of his heart; and the more perfectly he is empty of creatures, the more purely he will be filled with God alone. Can we ever be so entirely forsaken by creatures as our bessed Redeemer was

in his sacred passion? His example ought to make this state amiable to us. Courage, my soul, under this trial. It is sweet to tread in the steps of a God-man. It is sweet to be abandoned by creatures, to feel their emptiness, and to learn that the sons of men are false and treacherous, so as henceforward to place confidence only in God. O happy exchange! God for creatures. This consideration made St. Francis of Sales be charmed with the very thought of this state, in which a soul, forsaken and forgotten by all creatures, finds no relish but in God, who enters her so much the more abundantly, and fills her with his consolations so much the more sweetly. And the soul, forsaken by all creatures under heaven, tastes and more purely sees God, who, when all men abandon us, will not forsake us.

5. The loss of near and dear friends by death, is also a great and frequent affliction to us. By it we die partially before our own death; but, one of the most bitter circumstances in our own death is, the separation from our friends. Generally the most sensible and noble of all the enjoyments of life, in a disinterested tender mind, is that of friendship; and from this arise the purest and greatest satisfactions of life. The total loss of a near friend deprives a man of all these, and makes him appear to himself in all his actions, as if he had lost some limb or part of himself. Something is to be allowed to nature in this case; provided grief be not indulged, or suffered to go to any excess. A stoical apathy is far from the tender bowels of the saints. The blessed Virgin wept for her divine Son, &c.; St. Ambrose mourned the loss of Theodosius, Gratian, his brother Satyrus, and St. Bernard that of his brother Gerard. Hardness or insensibility is no part of virtue. But then a lively faith and an ardent love of God raises the soul above temporal things, and the consideration of his adorable will in all events, silences very much even the emotions of nature. Whence, St. Chrysostom, (Serm. 5, de Laz. t. 1, p. 765,) "I do not condemn grief for the death of a friend, but excess of grief. To mourn is nature, but to mourn beyond bounds madness and frenzy. Mourn, but be not impatient. Give thanks, to adorn your deceased friend; as death is to be regarded as a christian's gain. If you are impatient, you are injurious to your departed friend, you offend God and hurt yourself; but if you give thanks, you honour the deceased, glorify God, and procure great benefit to yourself."

To indulge grief on such an occasion is both unreasonable and unnatural, because, our sighs are all in vain; nay they waste our own life and impair our health, to no sort of use; and whereas all men desire happiness, we, on the contrary, fret and make ourselves miserable, increasing the load of our misfortunes. How would our deceased friend, were it allowed, reproach us and grieve himself, out of compassion for our madness and folly? We likewise by it betray a great weakness of mind, beneath true courage and fortitude, which chiefly consists in bearing well, with patience and resignation, the crosses, to which nature and providence its ruler subject us. Hence, the very heathens looked upon it as barbarous and beneath a rational man. David said very well, when his favourite child was dead: "Whilst he lived, I fasted and prayed; for I said; who knows if the Lord may perchance give him to me, and the child may live. But now he is dead why should I fast! Shall I be able to recal him again? I shall rather go to him; but he will return no more to me." 2 Kings xii. 22.

6. Religion moreover teaches us, that it is heathenish and argues a

want of faith. More was allowed to the Jews in mourning for their dead, the gate of heaven not being opened before the death of Christ, as St. Bernard observes; but now, that we have all reason to hope, that God has called our friend hence in mercy, and that he is now crowned with glory, can we grieve for his happiness? Perhaps, had he lived, he would have been the subject of greater griefs and many miseries to us, and of great evils to himself. We are to look upon his death as a design of God's paternal mercy upon him. "He hastened to draw him out of the midst of iniquities." Wisd. iv. 11. Oh! what secrets shall we see in the next life? We shall then sing hymns of joy and thanksgiving for what made us weep here. Is it an evil to be drawn by an all-wise and merciful Father out of dangers and miseries? What conflicts, scandals, seductions, and temptations, in which the elect themselves, if possible, would be overcome, does not a longer life expose to? If we fear the uncertainty of his lot, have we not reason to acquiesce in the bosom of God's mercies, to whom the departed person was always dearer than he could be to us? "How absurd is it to call heaven much better than this earth, yet to mourn for those, who depart thither in peace?" St. Chrysostom, l. 4, ad Vid. junior, t. 1, p. 341. "First, he would have seen heaven later; which is not a small loss. Add, that the cares of this world would not have dismissed him so pure and entire as he now was." Ib. St. Fulgentius, writing to the lady Galla on a similar occasion, says: "Do not think him lost, but sent before; imagine not his youth immaturely cut off, which you see firmly established, being fixed and strengthened by an unchangeable eternity." ep. 2, c. 2.

It is then ourselves and our own loss, that we weep for. Is not this too much self-love? Does not this argue, that our affections were so much set on him as to be an obstacle to the pure love of God? It made us forget our present banishment. God takes away the poison; and we grieve as a little child, when his mother takes from him a knife he was going to stab himself with. But this friend is not absolutely taken from us: he is only happily removed to immortality, to wait until we be speedily re-united to him. God thus weans our hearts from this earth, as it were in spite of us, obliging us to raise all our desires to heaven, whither he has already called part of us, in our friend, to make our whole hearts ascend to him. We are all hastening to eternity, to meet there never, more to be separated.

Add, that repining on such an occasion is injurious to God, who has called away his own creature, not ours. Why do we complain, if he has taken to himself his own servant?

But, under such afflictions, we ought not to reason with ourselves, or dwell on our calamities; the sensitive part of our soul is not to be governed by such means. Grief then is to be repressed by short aspirations, drawn from these motives; and our mind applied calmly to other things, by occupying ourselves in prayer, by grave company and serious employments, which may engross our attention; for such, as are jocose and amusing, would neither be decent nor suit the serious turn of our mind on such occasions.

7. The greatest of all trials are grievous interior anguishes of the soul. No one knows the severity of this martyrdom but those who have felt it. It is, however, most advantageous to the soul, that she may entirely die to herself, and be crucified in all her powers. Divine providence usually conducts through it, in some degree or other, all those, whom God afterwards

raises to his greatest favours and to the highest perfection, especially in the contemplative life; for in the active, exterior trials often do great part of the work, so that these interior sufferings are not so violent. Whence, St. Teresa remarks, that the trials and labours in the contemplative life are much severer than in the active. Exterior trials have moreover the satisfaction of several comforts, which the interior are deprived of; and as these are hidden, and known only to those who bear them, no one bemoans, pities, or comforts a soul under them. She has only God and his angels witnesses of what she suffers. But, as this trial is both greater and more void of all comfort from creatures, it contributes more effectually to work the division of the soul and spirit, or to crucify her to nature, to her senses, passions, self-love, and all creatures, that she may be prepared for the love of God perfectly to reign in her. It is also the highest trial of her fidelity to God. Souls, who seek to serve God in the ease and sweets of contemplation, must not expect that the kingdom of God should cost them nothing. This is contrary to the stated order of divine providence. Hence, God exercises souls by severe trials, after his first comforts in the beginning of their conversion, before he bestows on them his more extraordinary favours. By giving him these proofs, by making to him these sacrifices of themselves, they remove all obstacles to his perfect reign in their hearts, and draw down his complacency upon them, and are fitted to receive his most precious gifts and graces. They bear the image of their crucified Redeemer, who, besides his exterior torments, was pleased to suffer this inward martyrdom of the soul in feeling the most bitter anguish, which he expressed in his agony, crying out: "My soul is sorrowful unto death;" and on the cross, when he said: "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?"

8. These inward trials consist sometimes in involuntary fears, scrupulosity, obstinate temptations of importunate thoughts of infidelity, blasphemy, despair, or the like, which have no other effect than to fill the soul with extreme interior anguish; sometimes in a spiritual dryness, so great that the soul seems never to have had any trace of true virtue, or sentiment of devotion. This state is often accompanied with a spiritual darkness and a sort of insensibility.

These ways have less danger of any mixture of self-love; consequently, they have more of the pure love of God in them, and are more powerful for the divine union; as in them there is less of nature, the crucifixion of which they are, and they have more of grace. God permits the devil to to try his servants as he did Job; he therefore, assaults them with his utmost rage and fury. He sees their fervour, and dreads their spirit of mortification and humility. He therefore, leaves nothing undone to ruin them. All hell enters into a conspiracy, and leagues itself to raise persecutions, to darken and obscure all their interior powers, and to fill them with the most terrible images; but God will not permit them to be tempted above their strength, and permits all this only for their good. By exterior trials the soul is weaned from all creatures out of herself; by the inward martyrdom in all her powers, each of them is purged; the sensitive faculty, the intellectual, the imagination, and the will. God, for this end, seems, as it were, to strike the soul so as to cause inexpressible pain; abandons her imagination to distractions as to troublesome images; deprives her understanding of her lights, and the will of its spiritual relish and sensible affections. But these annihilations of all the senses and faculties are most agreeable martyrdoms and sacrifices of them all to God, as they cannot otherwise be crucified to creatures and disposed for God to reign in them. Thus, his

conduct seems full of rigour, but it is in reality the effect of an unspeakable mercy. Men's souls sick with sin, or at least weakened and corrupted by its dregs which they yet bear, can be neither healed nor washed perfectly by ordinary means. God, the true physician of souls, applies his own divine hand; and, because our disease requires painful application, we ought a thousand times to kiss his merciful hand, and melt in gratitude and thanksgiving for the care, with which he works our sanctification by extraordinary means; with which he treats only his favourites. Under these trials a soul must look upon the way of suffering as the best, the most pure, and the securest.

St. Teresa says, (l. de via perf.) that a soul advances more in receiving a suffering from God, than she could in ten years by means of her own choice. She must regard herself as happy to have a share in the sufferings of Christ; must patiently persevere in prayer under all states of dryness; and must humbly submit and follow the sentiments of an experienced director; for we must always renounce our own judgment and the conduct of ourselves. Physicians, when sick themselves, consult others. This submission of our own direction is absolutely necessary. We gain more by it than by a thousand instructions, and by all the austerities and devotions we could practise. Many have long laboured and prayed in vain to be delivered from interior fears and anguishes; which at last one simple submission to their confessor has at once freed them from. God demands the submission of our understanding and will: without this we labour in vain. But, we must expect the time of his salvation in patience. He knows our necessities and will adapt the remedy to them. All our interior is a fund of corruption, a sink filled with loads of filth amassed by vicious habits, all springing from self-love, the stinking principle of all the corrupted motions of our hearts. God probes its depth, and measures by it the work of the evacuation. He is a skilful though tender surgeon. As he sees the full extent of our inveterate wounds, he commences his operation, and cuts off and destroys whatever is corrupted and mortified in them. Affliction is the fire, by which he consumes all that is putrified in them. By it each of our faculties is to be purified.

Under states of spiritual dryness we must consider, that in this life we walk, as it were, in a desert. If we receive the dew of a heavenly manna, this a favour by no means our due, belonging only to faithful servants. We must consider such dryness as the just punishments of our sensual hearts, which had too much fed themselves on the filth of this earth. Sometimes we are to regard them as sent to give us a spiritual thirst of God, and make us cry ardently after him; and sometimes as a disposition for the deluges of heavenly comforts, which God would prepare us for. We must humble and reproach ourselves, that this punishment is most justly due to us, so sensual as we are, and so tepid in seeking God, and that, by making an ill use of them, we oppose God's merciful designs in them. We must be firmly persuaded, that our hearts are too impure to taste the gifts of God, and that all their impurities must be first cleansed away; and that it is just we should be deprived of heavenly consolations, who have made ourselves drunk with those of the earth.

As St. Gregory of Nyssa expostulates with great eloquence, (Or. 1, de orat. t. 1, p. 722.) "It is most absurd to ask temporal things from him, who offers goods which are everlasting, earthly instead of heavenly, base and abject instead of the most precious, transitory smoke from him, who is ready to bestow the kingdom of heaven," &c.

DISCOURSE LXV.

ON BODILY AFFLICTIONS OR SICKNESS.

1. After Job had lost his whole estate and all his children, by sudden dreadful calamities, the devil still said that his virtue would not be proof under sickness. "A man will give all that he has for his life and health: but stretch out thy hand and touch his face and his flesh, and thou wilt see that he blesses thee," (i. e.) loses his patience, said he to God. Whence St. Chrysostom, (p. 14, ad Olymp. ep. 4, t. 5, p. 598,) observes, that a grievous sickness is the greatest of trials. For a very painful sickness is often more severe than any exterior trials; as it is interior, and a man feels its whole weight within himself. By it he is made incapable of any exterior delights and enjoyments, and he suffers in his senses and flesh the sharpest tortures and pains. Yet this, in some degree at least, is the portion of all men. The king, the rich, and the voluptuous, are no more exempt from its scourge than the meanest beggar; nay, by their riotous high life, sometimes prepare for themselves a large portion. It then behoves all men to arm themselves for this trial by a sufficient stock of patience. It is a visit of mercy, a time of the greatest spiritual advantages, the harvest of virtue; yet, as the devout author of "The Imitation of Christ," complains, "Few are made better from sickness." Such as they were, such they die, or such they remain after their recovery. This proceeds from the little care men take to sanctify themselves by it, and from those worldly spirits being destitute of the sentiments of virtue, whereby they are entirely indisposed to profit by it. To consider the nature of sickness, and the spiritual advantages it brings, we must reflect, first, that, man having forfeited the state of immortality in which he was created, sickness is now become a necessary appendix of his nature and his sorrowful inheritance. The sentence of our mortality (Gen. ii. 17,) subjects him to it. He carries the seeds of various distempers in his body; uncertain what they are, or when or how some of them will break out and devour him, as every member, organ, fibre, or fluid ever so small, may become the subject of several sorts. No privilege of birth, rank, riches, wit, or learning; no strength of constitution or confirmed state of health can secure any man from its continual threat. The king as well as the beggar is liable to be made its prey. Many struggle with it all the days of their lives, others frequently suffer its conflicts. All expect it, at least, as the passage to death. This then is the general trial of all the sons of Adam. All must prepare themselves for it; all must bring the necessary dispositions to sanctify themselves by making a good use of it.

2. We must also reflect, that the spiritual advantages of sickness are innumerable. It often awakens the soul from sin. "God reproves by sorrow in bed." Job xxxiii. 19. "Then he opens the ears of men, and teaching them instructs them in discipline," v. 12. How many have been converted from sin by sickness? How many have been brought by it to renounce the world like St. Ignatius of Loyola? We may truly address the sick man in the words of Tertullian, (l. de pat., c. 11.) "O happy that servant! whose amendment the Lord himself takes in hand, to whom he vouchsafes to show his anger; whom he does not deceive by

dissembling and silence." This is the pastoral staff of the good shepherd, by which he brings back into the pastures of life those sheep, that were gone astray.

It often preserves from sin. The heart of Ezechias was puffed up with prosperity, but humbled by sickness. 4 Kings xx. It removes the opportunities and occasions of many sins; it extinguishes powerfully the most dangerous passions, the love of honour, of pleasures, and the like; for how can a man think of what he now feels no relish for? It helps to cure worldly pride, teaching a man his own weakness; for he who before thought himself above his fellows, struck by the hand of God, remembers he is mortal by a feeling sentiment thereof, and sees the folly of all his late towering false ideas of things. Even the proud Antiochus remembered he was subject to God, and Agrippa forgot his pride feeling the stroke of sickness. Ah! while many sins proceed from health and prosperity, as Moses experienced in the Israelites, (Deut. xxviii. 21, 22, 23,) sickness preserves from them. Is it not a great mercy of God to draw those to himself by sickness, who might lose themselves and offend him by health? "A grievous disease makes a sober mind or soul." Eccl. xxxi. 2.

3. It teaches the benefit of health, which in its vigour is little thought of, nor God duly thanked for. Such ungrateful persons justly learn to condemn and correct this fault by feeling the pains and inconveniences of sickness; and to prize and make a better use of that blessing, if it be again restored to them.

It purifies the soul from all imperfections in her works or intentions. It is as a fire, which separates the gold from copper, and silver from lead, (i. e.) the good metal from the bad and from dross. It purges and cleanses away rust and filth; gives a distaste for the earth and pure desires for heaven and of God alone; it heals and perfects the soul, that God may communicate himself to her with the greatest familiarity and effusion of graces.

4. Sickness is the great school of virtue and harvest of spiritual merit. It furnishes the greatest opportunities of patience, resignation, self-denial, charity, penance, &c. What quick progress in piety does not a soul make by the good use of sickness? Witness St. Lydwina, who by it was not only converted, but raised to the highest degree of sanctity. "Their infirmities were multiplied; afterwards they hastened." Ps. xv. 3.

God by it extinguishes in the soul the love of the world, and furnishes her with occasions of satisfying for sin, of purchasing virtue and his everlasting crowns. She is spiritually sick through the inordinate love of creatures. How is she to be cured? God applies this healing blister. "Like a physician he spares not, that he may spare; he is cruel out of pity and tenderness; nor does he consider the pain of the patient, but his health," as St. Jerom says in Ezech. You see the surgeon preparing his instruments; Oh cruelty! but no; Oh mercy! He does this to save, not to kill.

The soul is charged with heavy debts to the divine justice, which she is condemned to acquit either here by voluntary patience, or hereafter at a most severe rate. The merciful Judge exchanges her scorching flames and racks, surpassing all torments that can be imagined in this mortal life, for this passing sickness; to which he also annexes a crown. What a consolation to the suffering patient! He had not courage to undertake a severe course of penance, proportioned to his necessities; he spared

himself and touched his sores too gently; God, the true loving physician, applies his own healing hand, and ministers a remedy proper to subdue and satisfy for all past sensuality and immortification.

Heaven is to be taken by violence and by sufferings. It is the inheritance of Christ crucified, and can be possessed only by the sons of mount Calvary; by those who resemble that man of sorrows, whose mangled body had no place from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot free from its wound and pain. All the spiritual stones must be hewn and polished, before they can be fit for the building of that heavenly Jerusalem. A nobler destiny there requires a finer polish here. Our glory will be proportioned to our present sufferings. Not a moment, not the least portion of present suffering but what works an immense weight of glory to come. St. Romuald, afflicted with frequent violent distempers and pains, used to say: "The joys of heaven are so great, our suffering so small, and our lives so short, that we ought to die of shame, if we complain of any pains we can endure here for them."

5. By patience and resignation under sickness, we make the greatest and most meritorious sacrifice to God we are capable of. St. Chrysostom equals it to martyrdom, (Hom. 3, in 1 Thess. t. 11, p. 447.) "You have borne its pains with courage and constancy for the sake of Almighty God. This brings you the crown of martyrdom. Doubt not of this; for as a martyr suffers the pains of his torments rather than adore an idol, so do you bear the pains of your distemper; and if his tortures are more violent yours are longer." What a glorious triumph is that of a christian resigned and cheerful for the love of God under the sharpest pains! What trophies, what valour in the sight of God, of the angels, and all the saints, nay and of the devils too!

6. The period of sickness is always a time for penance. This virtue must remove all sin, which is often the cause of the bodily disease, as is evident from the holy scriptures. "Very many distempers arise from the sins of the soul," says St. Chrysostom, (Hom. 38, in Mat.) and Pope Innocent III., in the fourth general council of Lateran hence invites all sick persons to immediate repentance, because "the sickness of the body sometimes proceeds from the disease of the soul." Cap. cum infirmitas de pœnit. & remiss. The first care then must be to recover the health of the soul.

Again, sin is the obstacle of grace; it is therefore to be carefully removed in the beginning of this holy time of our sanctification, that no part of its advantages and sufferings may be lost, but made a satisfaction for sin, and a progress in virtue. Moreover, every sickness is a visitation of God, to put us in mind of our mortality, and to summon us to prepare ourselves for death, as St. Gregory observes, Hom. 13, in Evang. It is then of the highest importance to set about this immediate preparation on the very first receiving of this summons, by setting about a diligent confession without delay; for otherwise, it may be too late to do that great work, at least in a due maner; and, at best, some of this precious time will be lost. Pope Innocent III. in the fourth general council of Lateran, (cap. 13,) commands, that all physicians admonish every patient, who is confined to his bed by any grievous sickness, immediately to call for his confessor; which, if he should not do, after the third day, to threaten to forsake him, unless his danger obliged the physician, by the law of nature, still to serve him. Pope Pius V. has enjoined this still

more severely, and, in some countries, all graduates in physic swear to observe it. Though this law is not looked upon as every where in full force, yet it is at least what physicians ought to recommend, and what patients themselves ought to endeavour to practise. Barbosa, an eminent canonist, thinks this precept binding, even though the distemper be no ways dangerous, if it confine the patient to his bed. Many pious men have made a general confession on such occasions.

7. It is not sufficient to begin the sickness with a good confession made as if for the end of a man's life. As it is a time of penance, the practice of this virtue must be continued, with the greatest fervour, during its whole course. Let the sick man's thoughts be chiefly occupied on the maladies of his soul; and let him be chiefly solicitous about them, offering up the blood of his Redeemer for their expiation, and praying most fervently by frequent ejaculations for a pardon. "Have mercy on me, because I have sinned." Ps. vi. 2. "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed." Ps. lxxxvii. 3. Laying open all his spiritual miseries before the eyes of his heavenly physician, and never ceasing to implore his compassion and mercy. St. Augustin, in his sickness, repeated the penitential psalms with many tears, having had them written and hung round his bed for that purpose. Let the penitent repeat some of those psalms, or certain pathetic acts of contrition; and have often in his heart and mouth certain fervent ejaculations of repentance; as "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy;" or, "Lord, be propitious to me a sinner." Particularly, let him beg pardon by all the sacred wounds of Christ, and by his anguish and sorrows; often also imploring the intercession of the Mother of God, the refuge of sinners and comfort of the afflicted: "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and in the hour of our death." Be to us a true Esther, and a true Judith, in this our day of dangers and distress. Likewise invoking his other patrons, and all the angels and saints; happy themselves, but solicitous for us.

8. In this spirit of penance we must bear with patience, resignation, and joy, the pains and uneasiness of our sickness. We must consider the obligation and necessity of patience, its recompences, and innumerable happy advantages.

If we have before our eyes the torments of hell and purgatory, which we redeem by these present sufferings; or the incomprehensible joys of heaven, which we purchase by them; our greatest pains will appear as pleasures; we shall exult and triumph in spirit, insatiable in suffering all that God shall lay upon us, begging only, that he bestow on us holy patience, not to lose the advantages and crowns, which he offers us.

We ought to have a crucifix always before our eyes, and meditate often affectionately on all the torments and anguish, which our divine Saviour endured for us, saluting often each of his adorable wounds, and begging, by them, patience and pardon of our sins. St. Francis of Sales, writing to a friend concerning sickness, said: "If I were tormented with a violent head-ache, I durst not pray to our Saviour to be delivered by the merits of his being crowned with thorns. For has he suffered so much for me, and shall I suffer nothing for myself, or to testify my love for him?" And one day he burst out into this exclamation: "If I knew that I had one string left in my heart, which was not marked with the crucifix, I would not keep it one moment."

We must unite our sufferings with those of our blessed Redeemer, in

each of his sacred torments and wounds, and offer them to God in expiation of our sins, by each of our senses. What a happiness and glory is it to a christian, to be able to suffer something with and for the love of our crucified Redeemer!

Those, who are tempted to impatience, must more particularly apply themselves in their aspirations to God to beg patience, and to consider, in short ejaculations, the above motives of patience: also, that all our pains are laid on us, by our loving Father and God, for our good; that he drank for us the bitter cup of his passion, &c. Let them repeat: "Lord, here cut, here burn; providing you but eternally spare me. It is just that my criminal senses and flesh should suffer."

9. Patience in sickness ought to be accompanied with an entire resignation of ourselves to the will of God. Under sharp pains we may pray, that God's mercy may temper and mitigate the rigour of his justice, and, that he be pleased to abate our pains, if it be possible; yet, always closing our prayer with our divine Redeemer in the garden: "But not my will, but thine be done." He alone knows what is best for us: he is our Lord, and we are absolutely at his disposal. A creature has no more essential and indispensable obligation, than that of an entire submission to the will of his Creator. If then, we pray for life or health, it must be with this clause; and, our most earnest petition must be, that he grant us his holy grace and patience.

If, by our long sickness, we are a burden to others, and seem to be unprofitable to our family or friends, and that we do nothing to serve God or men; we must remember, that to have tired out others, and to be despised or ill served and assisted by them, is a great humiliation and suffering to us, and much for our spiritual good; our sickness is the will of God, and what is best for us and most agreeable to him. If we bear it well, we shall draw down God's blessing upon our family and all mankind, and shall sanctify ourselves more than we could by any other means whatsoever. St. Paul was two years in prison, when his young converts seemed to stand in need of him. If you are an artisan, and that a wife and children suffer by your sickness, God knows all that; let them also profit in the school of the cross, as it is God's will. If you cannot hear mass, or join in the prayers of the church, humble yourself as unworthy, and your fervent desire will procure you a share in them; in like manner, your suffering patiently is better than those spiritual exercises, which it debars you from. If you cannot serve your neighbour, corporally or spiritually, offer up your sufferings for him; this will procure greater blessings, and it is more meritorious for you to suffer than to act. If all your pious designs miscarry, suffering is more acceptable to God than their success could be. The best science in a christian is to know how to suffer; the greatest progress in virtue, is made by suffering well. The children of light know, that nothing is more precious in a spiritual life, than to suffer for and with our God; and, that to gather these sacred reliques of his cross, is far more advantageous, than to possess those of the holy material wood, on which he suffered for us; as, the former are the living copies of his adorable passion. See the example of Servulus, an eminent saint, by patience in sickness; St. Greg. Dial. l. 4, c. 14.

10. Let a man in sickness turn his whole heart and all his thoughts to God. The earth now forsakes him; riches, friends, dainties, even physicians, are now but feeble succours to him. Ought he not, then, to

convert himself to him, who alone is able to relieve and truly comfort him? Let him never cease to beg of him, with all possible earnestness, the health of his soul. The pains and infirmities of his body, which he feels sensibly, ought to make him consider in a more lively manner the miseries and necessities of his soul, his better part, and recommend them to God's compassion and mercy.

Let him also commend to him the health of his body. Experience shows, that the greatest skill and most powerful remedies are, in most cases, very uncertain, and sometimes even hasten death, and check the most favourable dispositions of nature. His chief confidence, then, must be in God, and his blessing must be begged on the natural means employed. It was the reproach of Osee, king of Juda, that "in his sickness he sought not the Lord, but confided rather in the art of physicians." 2 Par. xvi. 2.

We are, however, bound in sickness to employ the ordinary and natural means of health. To neglect them, would be to tempt God, by expecting his miraculous succour, when we had means in our hands; or, to be our own self-murderers, by throwing away our life, which we are not masters of, but which belongs to God. We are not bound to look for extraordinary means to preserve our life, (e. g.) by remedies too expensive, or by a painful abscission of some members, though, to undergo such an operation for health, out of a good motive, is a part of virtue; but we are obliged not to neglect the ordinary means, such as the use of more simple remedies. The physician is the ordinary minister, by whose art God usually restores health. We read, that king Ezechias being sick, and, having recourse to God, he sent his prophet Isaiah to him, who, applying dry figs to the abscess, in which his fever seemed to have terminated, restored him to his health. 4 Kings xx. 7. Physic has no better poultice, to promote the suppuration of an abscess, than what the prophet was directed by God to use.[a] The Omnipotent could, by his only word, have healed the prince; but he chose to do it by those natural remedies, with which he has furnished us, to teach us they are his gifts, and that we ought not to neglect them. The advice of the Holy Ghost is, that we join prayer and physic. "Honour, the physician for necessity; for the Most High created him. Because all medicine is from God." Eccl. xxxviii. 1, 2. "Son, in thy sickness neglect not thy self; but pray the Lord, and he will cure thee." Ib. v. 9. The apostle says, (Ephes. v. 29,) "No man hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it;" viz. not to pamper it, but to employ it as the instrument of the soul in the service of God. That great example of mortification, St. Charles Borromeo, in his sickness, was most scrupulously careful to observe every tittle of his physician's orders, out of a principle of duty. St. Chrysostom was very careful and solicitous to procure medicines from Constantinople, in his sickness, during his banishment. ep. 4, t. 3. St. Olympias, and his other friends, often sent him drugs at a great expense.

Alas! how few consider the great designs of mercy, which God forms upon them, when sick? At that time, men usually abandon themselves more to seek the satisfaction of senses, and to lose the spirit of mortification even amidst sufferings. Secondly, they are impatient under their pains, indulge in delicacies, and suffer themselves to be carried away, by little impatiences against others; fretting at every service that is done to

[a] See Syn. Critic. ib. & Mead de morbis biblicis, c. 5.

them, and at all that approach them. Thirdly, they are occupied on their body, and neglect to give attention to their souls, or to be employed on their interior.

11. It is a capital duty, from the very beginning of any grievous sickness, to commence seriously our immediate preparation for death, as if we knew it to be our last sickness; whereas, we neither know its day nor its hour. This distemper is certainly a visitation of God to put us in mind of our last end. It is, perhaps, that which will lay us in our grave. When it shall be grown too violent, how shall we then prepare ourselves for that critical great passage? We ought then to reflect, that God perhaps now says to us, as he did by his prophet to king Ezechias: "Set thy house in order, because thou shalt die, and shall not live." Isa. xxxviii. 1.

Nothing is more astonishing than the general folly of most men in putting off preparation for death, though they know it to be most certain, and its day and hour most uncertain, and yet that their eternal lot depends on that dreadful moment. Alas! their whole life ought to be a perpetual preparation for it and meditation thereon, as all the saints made theirs to be; yet many, even when put in mind of it by sickness, still defer to think seriously of it, because, their distemper does not seem at first very dangerous or mortal. Such persons are often prevented by some sudden revolution in their body, loss of their senses, or sudden death; or at least do not set about the work till they are no longer in a condition for it. No floods of tears, for an eternity, can ever be able sufficiently to lament this most terrible misfortune of souls, and its everlasting consequences, the very dismal thought whereof fills us with too great horror to be named or dwelled upon.

12. In the very beginning of any fit of sickness, which may prove serious, let a man not defer one moment to set his house in order, and begin his immediate preparation, as for death, by sincere repentance, and by settling his temporal concerns by a will duly made, if he have not one already made, as every good prudent Christian ought to have, to prevent any surprize; for they, who are unwilling to make their will whilst in health, are more so when sick, being loth to think of leaving what they cannot carry with them, or at least to own they are leaving it, which they foolishly imagine this act to be a sign of; nor do friends often care to suggest what they fear will be a disagreeable or melancholy proposal; thus such persons generally have this duty on their hands, when at the extremity. The making of a will is an obligation on all those, who have temporal concerns to be put in order, not only that law-suits and all private bickerings may be prevented, the succession conveyed in its right channel, and what is due to every one secured in the easiest and safest natural way to them, &c., all which are duties of strict justice; moreover that services, which deserve a requital of gratitude, or of any other title, may not be unrewarded, nor reasonable charities or tokens neglected; for, though the obligation in these be not so rigorous as in justice, it is still binding, and in some cases not far inferior to that of justice. This attention every one owes to God, whose steward he is in his temporal estate; to his family, which he is bound to support for the benefit of posterity; to his friends, for whom he ought to provide according to his abilities; and to himself, as it is by this means that he is to survive himself, and to perpetuate his services to God and his neighbour beyond his own grave, and, as much as in him lies, to the latest ages. A neglect herein is often a manifold transgression against

justice to several, against piety towards his own, against legal right towards the commonwealth, of which every member and family are a necessary and useful branch, the more important, the greater its influence and authority in it is; a violation of all the other duties, which he owes to mankind, and the cause of all the murmurs, detractions, animosities, and other evils, that ensue. They who have a will ready made, if any thing is to be added or altered in it, may do this by a codicil. In the last will, it is a pious, christian custom to insert a short, modest protestation of our faith and hope; but let nothing savour of vanity. It is the spirit of piety and of the church, that the funeral should be ordered in a style of simple decency, without incurring needless pomp or expense. Temporal affairs ought to be settled, so that the sick man may more calmly apply himself totally to the care of his soul. Such friends, whose sight or discourse serve only to disturb or fill his mind with worldly thoughts, ought not to be admitted to him more than is absolutely necessary for decency, or comfort and charity. All, who approach him, ought to endeavour to assist him for the benefit of his soul, or at least to avoid whatever may hinder his attention to it.

Restitution for any injustice belongs to repentance. Let the penitent make it immediately himself, and not defer it one moment, much less leave it for his will, or to be done by an heir. If it be absolutely impossible that it should be done otherwise, let the heirs be compelled to execute it expeditiously, under the condition of some considerable loss or penalty, lest a thing so essential for his soul's rest should be so arranged as to admit delays.

If any public enmity with any one have taken place, it is necessary that the sick man should forgive the offence in a public manner before witnesses, and, if necessary, before a notary. In like manner, that he ask forgiveness of any, whom he may have offended, and omit nothing to bring about a perfect reconciliation and sincere peace. But all these things are to be done secretly, if the cause have been secret, publicly if public, according to the nature of the circumstances. If he had injured another in his reputation, he is bound to a reparation to the best of his power, by word of mouth, a testimony given in writing, or any other way possible. As these obligations are essentially indispensable, no pretences, exemptions, or delays whatsoever can be listened to.

After confession, whether general or otherwise, the sick person must make the repetition of acts of repentance his favourite exercise, as his chief preparation to go forth with confidence to meet his heavenly spouse. His other principal exercises must be made up of acts of resignation, patience, faith, hope, and charity, repeated in short ejaculations, or in such devout prayers or lectures as may not fatigue him, but suit his head and strength.

13. To exercise acts of resignation to death, we must offer ourselves to die at the time, in the manner, and with all the circumstances God pleases, making this debt of nature and punishment of sin a voluntary sacrifice of ourselves to our sovereign Lord, and a victim for the atonement of our past sins; remembering how Christ, our model, offered himself without reserve to drink the bitter cup of his passion, when he saw it presented to him by his Father. "He was offered, because he willed it himself." Isa. liii, 7. No complaints, no murmurs, no opposition. If he once prayed that it might pass from him, if possible, it was with the most perfect, calm resignation to his heavenly Father's will, desiring only to be heard according to

it. "As a sheep he shall be led to slaughter, and as a lamb be silent before him that shears it, and he shall not open his mouth." Isa. liii. 7.

Christ vouchsafed, "through the grace of God, to taste death for all," Heb. ii. 9, that he might take from it its sting and bitterness. How can it any longer seem bitter to us? Is it hard for us to taste it for him, and after him, nay with him? Death is stript and disarmed, nay swallowed up by the triumph of this Man-God over it. "Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Cor. xv. 54. The apostle now insults it by a challenge, which has nothing of presumption. "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" Ib. 55. It has lost its sting by the virtue of the cross of Christ. It is the privilege of God's servants not to feel its affliction in dying. "The torment of death shall not touch them." Wisd. iii. 1. Shall we by our fear renounce this rare privilege? Shall we by a pusillanimity unworthy of faith feel its torment, nay anticipate and augment it? We die to go to our God, to enjoy him; shall we not with joy leave this earth to behold his glory, and to possess all his delights?

Who knows what evils a person might not be reserved to by a prolongation of life? Josia's falling in battle was a mercy in favour of his fidelity, as well as a light punishment. "For that thou hast heard the words of the volume, and thy heart is struck with fear, and thou art humble before the Lord; therefore, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy sepulchre in peace, that thy eyes may not see all the evils, which I will bring upon this place." 4 Kings xxii.

Elias had such evils in view, when he said: "It sufficeth me, Lord, take my soul." 3 Kings xix.

14. We are to make frequent acts of offering our death to God, and accepting it cheerfully for his glory and to obey his will. It is the greatest and most heroic act of one's life to lay it down for God. No one has greater love than this for a friend, as our Saviour declares. It is a pity then we should lose the merit and advantage of this oblation; by often repeating it, we shall work ourselves into the most fervorous sentiments of this total sacrifice of ourselves, and shall multiply it in the sight of God; therefore, daily in health, but especially in sickness, it will be an excellent devotion to offer our death to God as a sacrifice of obedience to his adorable will, and of acknowledgment of his sovereign dominion, to whom as to the great master of life and death we surrender it cheerfully the very instant he shall demand it, in union with that sacrifice of obedience, which Christ made in his sacred death. What a victory will this sincere act be over the inclinations of nature, to which death is terrible! Under which we shall say with Christ: "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Mat. xxvi. 39.

Secondly, we must offer it in the same act as a sacrifice of penance. Christ offered himself to death for the remission of sins; and we must offer our death to God, with his, for the expiation of our sins. It is a punishment inflicted on us for them; but by grace it may be made a satisfaction for them. Can the sentiments of perfect penitence employ any act more proper for its last consummation, than an annihilation of the body of sin, and a destruction of the very root of concupiscence, with all the instruments and occasions of its offences?

Thirdly, we must offer it as a sacrifice of love, as Christ died for love of us. At such a spectacle on mount Calvary, we cannot but cry out: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things, which he has done for me?" Ah! I will at least joyfully resign to him, and for his holy will,

my poor, wretched, criminal life, begging of him to sanctify and make acceptable this my oblation by uniting it with his. "I will receive the chalice of salvation." Ps. cxv. By death we shall be made one in God: "For man shall not see me and live." Exod. xxxiii. Ah! love must then embrace joyfully this invitation: "Let me not delay that I may see him." St. Aug. Conf. l. 1, c. 5. By it, says the Lord, "I will show thee every good thing."

DISCOURSE LXVI.

ON THE VIATICUM AND EXTREME UNCTION.

1. It is a strict divine and ecclesiastical precept, that all adults before death receive the blessed eucharist by way of spiritual viaticum. A neglect in this point is a grievous sin. Every one is obliged to receive it, "who is in a probable danger of death," whether from sickness, accident, or any violent cause whatsoever, provided it can be administered with reverence. Hence malefactors before execution, persons wounded to danger of their lives, and all who are by sickness in probable danger, are bound to receive it. The point of death, or when it certainly is at hand, is not to be waited for. A probable danger that death will follow suffices for this precept, and, in a doubt of the danger, the viaticum is to be given. The precept of receiving this sacrament fasting from midnight does not regard it, when administered as a viaticum. If a danger of death be foreseen, though not yet imminent, a person is bound to anticipate it by communicating before the danger; and this he may likewise do not fasting, if he cannot do it fasting. Hence, there is an obligation of communicating before a long dangerous voyage, or a danger of madness, a long absence of a priest, or ordinarily before entering on certain medical prescriptions, under which, were any accident to happen, the patient could not receive. Under a fit of perpetual vomiting up what is taken, or under any other danger of irreverence, the sacrament cannot be given. If the patient cannot swallow the host, it may be moistened in a little wine or other liquid, and so given. Children, who have never yet received, if capable of discerning the body of the Lord, are necessarily to receive the viaticum. Though it be not given to persons entirely distracted or mad, yet in a doubt whether they have not some small use of reason, and there be no danger of any disrespect, especially if they have been always devout towards the blessed sacrament, and so must retain the same sentiments now, though in part perhaps from mere habit, they ought not to be deprived of it. After having received the viaticum the patient may still communicate, fasting as usual, and every day if it were proper. He may receive again not fasting, and by way of viaticum, after six or seven days, if his danger still continue; for this is the term allowed by the most reasonable divines, and by the custom of most churches. Therefore, persons in sickness or in the other circumstances above mentioned are to be reminded to desire to receive the holy viaticum, and to prepare themselves for it with the greatest purity of soul, devotion, and fervour. The viaticum is not to be given with irreverence, (as e. g.) to scandalous sinners, unless they have

repaired the scandals given. Hence, in Rome it is never administered to penitents, unless previously removed out of infamous houses. Persons wounded in a duel may receive it, providing they first publicly manifest their repentance. If the person be too sick and weak to remain fasting till the priest can bring him the holy communion, at a seasonable hour, so that it may be done with due reverence, he may and ought to receive it not fasting and by way of viaticum, though there be no danger of death at hand; (see La Croix, &c.) which is confirmed by daily practice in catholic countries, in giving the holy communion to infirm or old men at Easter, and in hospitals in many other cases.

Pope Martin V. in his Bull, Ineffabile sacramentum, (t. 1. Bullar, p. 328,) grants these indulgences: "We release, of their enjoined penances, a hundred days to all those who, when the body of our Lord is carried to communicate the sick, shall go before or follow it with a lighted torch; and to others, who shall devoutly follow it fifty days." Other like indulgences have been granted for the same devotion, which the Roman ritual orders the priest to announce on that occasion. Eugenius IV. doubled the above said indulgences, Excellentissimum corporis, &c. Bullar, t. 1, p. 342.

2. The holy sacrament of the blessed eucharist is the compendium of all the mysteries, and the fruit of the sufferings of Christ; it contains the virtue of them all, and communicates their graces and effects to our souls. It is our spiritual food and nourishment; our complete viaticum or magazine of provisions; our strength and support during the course of our present pilgrimage, as its type, the bread given to Elias, signified; of which we read: "And he walked in the strength of that food unto the mountain of God, Horeb." 3 Kings, xix.

It is our life, by which we are preserved from spiritual death; whence, our Saviour calls this sacrament so often our life, and the bread of life. "He that eateth me, the same shall live by me. This is the bread, that came down from heaven. Not as our fathers did eat manna and are dead. He, that eateth this bread, shall live for ever." John vi. 58, 59. "He who eats life cannot die; for how shall he die, whose food life itself is?" says St. Ambrose, Serm. 18, in Ps. 118. Our bodies are become mortal by sin. Christ has restored them to immortality after his resurrection; and the holy eucharist, being his immortal flesh, is made the medicament or seed and principle of this gift in them. Hence, the fathers style it the "pharmacopeia and seed of immortality," as it is called by St. Cyril of Alexandria in c. 6, Joan, St. Irenæus, &c.

This sacrament, containing the plenitude of all graces, clothes us with the robe of sanctity, enriches our poverty, supplies our wants, and converts our weakness into strength and power. It is also our most powerful security and protection against our spiritual enemies, and particularly against the evils and terrors of death. Job prayed against the assaults of devouring enemies: "Deliver me, and place me by thyself; and let whosoever's hand fight against me." Job xvii. 3. With this he saw himself invincible, Here God does not set us by himself, but places himself in the midst of us, vouchsafes to cover us with himself as with a shield against all assailants, and renders us inaccessible to all the powers of hell and death. He becomes himself our escort, our guide, our light, and our way to eternity. But the principal effect of this adorable sacrament is, that in it Christ unites himself, nay incorporates himself with us,

that we may be made one in him, and remain in him, and he in us. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him." John vi. 57. By this we bear his image in us, and are presented as such before the throne of God. In it we receive the most sacred pledge of that glory, which we hope; for as we see, that he has already bestowed himself upon us, first, to be our redemption, and secondly, to be our food and nourishment, we have the most undoubted assurance put into our hands, that he will most certainly complete his promises, and again give himself to us to be our bliss. Nay he here unites himself to us only to give us final perseverance, and a happy consummation in his glory. Though the principal effects of the holy viaticum are to arm and prepare us for our great passage to the life of immortality, yet, it often conduces to restore present corporal health, when this is conducive to God's honour, and expedient for our souls.

3. The effects of this divine sacrament show, that it has been instituted by Christ to be our spiritual support during the course of our whole pilgrimage here on earth, but most especially to be our great viaticum in the article of death. Hence the church, by the severest canons, commands her pastors to watch, that none of her penitent children, how grievous sinners soever they may have been, should depart this life without it, in which point she has corrected the severe discipline of certain private churches. See the first general council at Nice, St. Innocent I. ep. 2, ad Exup,&c. Hence, the great solicitude in the times of persecution, that all should be armed with it. On which St. Cyprian writes; "He cannot be fit for martyrdom, who is not armed by the church to battle? and that soul faints, which the blessed eucharist does not raise and inflame."[a] And again, ep. 5. "We arm with the strength of divine food those, whom we desire to be secure against the enemy."

As the Philistines, seeing the ark brought into the camp of the Jews, cried out in fear: "God is come into their camp; wo to us." 1 Kings iv. 8, so, this presence of Christ in the soul puts the devils to flight, as it is the most august mystery of the cross, by which they were vanquished. It sanctifies the soul, so that St. Chrysostom assures us, (l. 6 de sacerd. p. 424,) that it was shown by a revelation to a great servant of God, that angels surround with respect the souls of those, who having devoutly received this sacrament are ready to leave this world, because, of the body of Christ which they have been partakers of, and that they wait to carry them to bliss. And in another place, (Hom, 24, in 1 Cor.) he says, "If you depart this life strengthened by this divine food, you will ascend with great confidence to the heavenly court, as if adorned with a most precious robe; for you carry with you the Lord of heaven himself, at whose sight the angels will attend you, and conduct you to his throne." On account of these particular and most important reasons, it is easy to understand how grievous an enormity would be implied in a profanation of the viaticum, and what great devotion a person ought to bring to it, greater, if

[a] Idoneus esse non potest ad martyrium, qui ab ecclesia non armatur ad prælium; & mens deficit, quam non recepta eucharistia erigit & accendit. S. Cyp. ep. 54, ad Cornelium, (ed. Pam. 57, ed. Oxon.) The same father, when hid in the persecution, wrote, (ep. 5, ed. Pam. 57 and Oxon.) to the priests & deacons of his church, to admonish them to be very solicitous to convey the holy eucharist to the confessors and martyrs in prison. Upon which passage Fell, the protestant bishop of Oxford, has this note: "Martyres id maxime satagebant, ut nunquam divino illo viatico carerent."

possible, than the preparation for an ordinary communion. Acts of faith, hope, charity, reconciliation with enemies, pardon of injuries, &c. are to be made.

4. The motives of fear, humility, fervour, love, and desire of union with God are more pressing than on any other occasion, and ought to excite the most perfect dispositions for receiving the viaticum. The following aspirations, or such like may be suggested.

I tremble at the sight of my miseries: I earnestly aspire to thee, my deliverer; but am overwhelmed with fear and confusion. I am scarcely able to think, much less to prepare myself to approach thee, dread God of majesty and sanctity: having nothing to supply my incapacity but thy infinite mercy and grace. Do, thou, dispose me to so great a work, that I may receive thee not to my condemnation, the very thought whereof overwhelms me with fear, but to mercy and salvation; cleanse, inflame, and adorn my miserable soul for this purpose.

I am covered with sin as with an universal leprosy; I was conceived in its filth: all my faculties, members, and senses; all my life almost all my past actions and thoughts are defiled by it: I am a real monster of baseness and ingratitude. Father of mercies, look on me with compassion; deliver me from all my evils; cleanse me perfectly from all my stains; touch my heart with true christian compunction, and wash it in the laver of thy precious blood, that being made pure I may be able to stand in thy sight, and not convert thy Holy of Holies into my most terrible judgment. Thou art infinite sanctity and purity, and nothing of sin can appear before thee. Purify my soul, that I may not be struck by thee for my rashness in presuming to approach thee.

I know and most firmly believe, that in this sacrament I receive thy sacred body and blood, and lodge thee, true God, in thy dread divinity and majesty, in my poor soul. The stars of heaven, thy angels themselves, were not pure in thy sight; and how do I presume so high as to dare to receive thee into my breast? Thou thyself hast been pleased to institute this wonderful sacrament out of compassion for my miseries, that thou mightest heal them by so sovereign a remedy. Thou invitest me to it, and, if I refuse or excuse myself, threatenest me that I shall not have any part with thee in thy kingdom, nor be admitted unto thy nuptial feast. Can one sick refuse a sure means of health offered to him? Can extreme misery and poverty fly from relief? Can a criminal reject the gracious tender of pardon and favour? No; the sight of my own grievous calamities no less urges me to thy sovereign banquet than thy unspeakable goodness. I humbly beg, that thy mercy suffer me not to abuse so great a deliverance to my more terrible undoing.

I likewise behold in myself all weakness, yet surrounded with external evils and dangers, and with strong and cruel enemies studying with indefatigable malice to devour me. "The sorrows of death have encompassed me; the torments of iniquity have disturbed me; the sorrows of hell have surrounded me, and the snares of death have seized on me." Ps. xvii. 5, 6.

Sin, hell, the devil, and the jaws of death are what I fear being overtaken by. All these evils stand around and press in close upon me. Where shall I find a refuge? To whom shall I fly for protection? To thee only, my God and all-powerful Saviour, and that in this thy holy sacrament. I arise, therefore, blessing for ever thy infinite goodness, and with a firm confidence in thy mercy, power, and strength approach to

cover myself therewith. Despise not my cries, O my God, from the depths of my evils and dangers. In thee I trust and shall not be confounded. "Thou hast prepared in thy sight a table against those, that afflict me." Ps. xxii. 6. "Though I shall walk in the midst of the shades of death, I shall not fear evils, because thou art with me." Ib. 4.

I am a poor worm of the earth, and a most miserable sinner; nevertheless thou, O infinite Lord, rich in glory, grace, and all good things, commandest me to call thee Father: thou art my creator, redeemer, and most loving spouse. I am stamped with thy divine image, bought and washed from sin with thy sacred blood, sanctified and made precious in thine eyes by thy mercy and grace, and framed to love and enjoy thee. Thou art my beginning and end; my centre and my all. My sins have caused a division between me and thee. Oh! how do I abhor and detest them? how do I grieve and weep, that I should have been so base, and ungrateful as ever to have offended thee, and wounded my immortal soul? From my heart I grieve for and detest all my sins, resolved, by thy grace, never more to offend thee. Increase this my sorrow and compunction; and by thy mercy and the bath of thy precious blood, efface in me all the stains of my guilt, and remove entirely the obstacles to thy grace and to the union of my soul with thee.

Behold the languishing desires of my heart to thee, and visit, sanctify, adorn, comfort, and strengthen it. Kindle in it the fire of thy holy love, and extinguish in it all affection for creatures, that I may be able to say, I am all thine, and may deserve to receive thee with the plenitude of thy graces in this thy holy sacrament; that henceforth and for ever I may always abide in thee, and thou in me; that I may ever remain united to thee by the band of an invincible love, in which nothing may ever separate me from thee.

Fervent aspirations must be repeated, without violence, in profound sentiments of humility, compunction, and divine love; e. g. "As the hart desireth," &c., or, Come, sweetest come; relieve my poverty and miseries; unite me to thyself; incorporate me in thee. In this my dreadful journey I want a guide and advocate to support and comfort me, to be all to me.

The viaticum must be received with the warmest affections and the most profound respect and devotion. The Duke De Mercœur, returning crowned with laurels from his glorious victories over the Turks, and falling sick at Nuremberg, a Lutheran city in Germany, where the magistrates refused to suffer the blessed sacrament to be carried to him, ordered himself to be removed to the next Catholic village. The Protestants out of pity, to prevent this, granted his request. Seeing the holy eucharist brought into his chamber, he arose, prostrated himself on the floor, and, having most devoutly received it, sweetly expired in that posture immediately after.

5. After receiving the holy viaticum, the soul must entertain herself in praise, love, and acts of oblation, sacrifice, and petition. "I adore thee, my God, present in my breast; all ye heavenly spirits, behold here the throne of your God; attend and praise him for ever. I most humbly bow down all the powers of my soul to you, O dread Lord, and thank you with all my affections for this unspeakable condescension, and for all your infinite mercies to me. May the angels never cease for all eternity to praise and thank you with me for it. Now, O Lord, dost thou dismiss thy servant, according to thy word, in peace. O the sweet love of my heart,

and my all, I now hold you, and will no more dismiss you, by your holy grace, which I most earnestly crave. I with joy henceforth renounce the world, and all the things which are of the world. May I say sincerely and in truth, with your apostle: 'I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me.' I now possess thee under the veil of this sacrament; grant, that I may after death be united to thee in thy glory, and behold thee no longer in type and figure, but face to face. I desire to be dissolved and to be with thee; for to live is Christ to me, and to die a gain. Impart thy benediction to all thy servants, particularly those under my care, or for whom I ought in particular to pray: to thy whole church, and to all mankind. May thy holy name be known, honoured, and loved over the whole world; may thy sacred love reign in every heart. Give my poor soul thy blessing, with all thy precious gifts and graces; make me breathe and live only to thee, and remain always thine alone; cleanse and sanctify me more and more, and call me to thyself in peace. Into thy hands I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus receive my soul. Holy mother of God, my guardian angel, my devout patrons, and all the blessed angels and saints become earnest intercessors for me." Cardinal Hosius, who had been the Pope's Legate at the opening of the council of Trent, having received the viaticum, said: "Stay with us, O Lord, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent," Luke xxiv. 29; with which words he devoutly expired.

6. Besides the viaticum, Christ was pleased to institute a special sacrament, commonly called Extreme Unction, or the last annointing, to wipe away the remains of sin, and prepare us for our great passage to eternity; of which St. James writes thus, v. 14, 15: "Is any man sick among you? let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man; and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." Here occurs every proper character of a true sacrament of the new law. First, a visible sign, viz., the anointing of the sick man, and the prayer of faith. Secondly, the promise of grace conferred by it, viz., the raising up of the sick man, and the remission of sins; viz. in his soul. Thirdly, it is not mentioned as a temporary rite, but as a permanent perpetual ordinance, as appears from those words: "Is any one sick among you?" nor can it be doubted that Christ was the institutor; otherwise, the apostle would never have mentioned it in such absolute terms as a thing ordained; nor could he have annexed the promise of grace to it, which is as explicit and formal as in the institution of baptism. St. James cannot be understood chiefly of a miraculous restoring of bodily health; the gift of miracles was not perpetual, as this promise is; nor does he order the prophets or performers of miracles, but the priest to be called in, and the raising up of the sick man is principally relative to his soul, as it is an absolute promise, which cannot be understood of the body; otherwise no christian would have died. And had it been relative merely to the state of the body, it should also have included the blind, deaf, and crippled, who were the great objects of the gift of miracles in the apostolic age. The sacred text is indeed clear enough of itself; but the tradition of the church gives to it the highest degree of evidence. The anointing of the sick practised by the Jews no more agreed with this than their ablutions did with baptism. That was used in the slightest disorders, and as a natural remedy; this regards persons

dangerously ill, according to the original Greek word *ασθενειν*, as Selden proves, l. 2, de syn. c. 7, n. 11, & 12. That practice was accidental; this ordered and for a different end, viz., against temptations, and to remit sins.

We read, (Mark vi. 13,) that the apostles "anointed with oil many, that were sick, and healed them." This miraculous gift, was a gradual preparation towards the dignity, to which Christ afterwards raised this unction, establishing it a perpetual holy right in his church. Origin refers not this to the gift of miracles, but ranks it amongst the ways of remission of sin, quoting for it the passage of St. James; Hom. 2, in Lev. Pope Innocent I. whose learning and sanctity was so highly celebrated by St. Ambrose, St. Austin, &c. in his epistle to Decentius, bishop of Eugubio, a decretal in every age held in the greatest esteem by the church, mentions this unction of the sick by priests, according to St. James, as a perpetual and universal divine law and holy sacrament, and declares, first, that a bishop has authority to administer it, as well as simple priests, as he is more than a priest, and this oil can be consecrated only by the bishop; secondly, he pronounces that penitents cannot receive it, viz. before their absolution, because they are excluded from all sacraments, consequently from this. "To whom the other sacraments are denied, how can one kind be granted?"[a]

The matter of this sacrament is oil of olives, without any mixture; it is necessary, and, according to St. Thomas, essential, that it has been blessed by a bishop. The organs of the five senses, the chief instruments of our sins, are all to be necessarily anointed. To these is added, not of necessity for the sacrament, the anointing of the feet, and, in some places, of the loins in men. If an organ of some sense be lost, the next part is to be anointed for it. The form is the prayer of faith, by which the priest begs God's mercy and pardon for the person's sins, whilst he anoints him. All who have ever enjoyed the use of reason, and consequently, may have ever committed actual sin, may, and are bound to receive this sacrament, when they are in danger of death by sickness; consequently children, of whom we doubt whether they have attained the use of reason or not, though they have never received the sacrament of penance, or the holy communion; also, persons now mad, or out of their senses, if they have not always been so; likewise, persons dying of wounds, though received in a duel, if now penitent; or dying of poison, because they are sick: but not soldiers before fighting, notwithstanding the great danger of death, nor malefactors, before execution; because they are not sick. This sacrament ought not to be deferred to the last, but should be given, if possible, while the patient in the enjoyment of his reason, can prepare himself to receive it with more fruit; and, whilst bodily health may be more easily recovered, if conducive to God's honour. Though the distemper should be very long, yet, if it seem mortal, this sacrament may be given in the beginning of it; and ought to be so, if the distemper be of a treacherous kind, and death may ensue without much forewarning, as in the bad sorts of malignant small-pox. It cannot be received twice during the same distemper: or rather during the same state of distemper: for, if a person seem better, though not recovered, and becomes worse again, he may again be anointed; which may commonly be done after about fifteen days

[a] Quibus reliqua sacramenta negantur, quomodo unum genus putatur posse concedi?

interval. In a doubt, it is more conformable to the ancient discipline to reiterate it, and more advisable.[a]

7. The effects of this sacrament are, first, the increase of sanctifying grace, as in all sacraments. Secondly, the pardon of venial sins, and the remission of the punishment due to them, in proportion to the receiver's dispositions; sometimes, by accident, also of mortal sin, which the penitent could not confess; for the apostle attributes to it the remission of sin, if the patient lie under it.

Thirdly, It is the consummation of penance and the perfect healing of sin, the remains whereof it wipes away, abating the propensity to evil, left by sin, the sloth for virtue, and the weakness of the mind, in raising itself to heavenly things. This St. James means by those words: "The Lord shall raise him up." It also conduces to restore bodily health, if this be for the spiritual benefit of the soul.

Fourthly, It procures special grace and spiritual courage, to bear patiently the pains of the distemper, strength against temptations, and succours against the last and most vigorous assaults of Satan, and the dangers and alarms of death. The enemy is never more violent in his attacks on the poor soul, knowing the importance of her last moments, and that he has but little time; and man, of himself, is never less able to resist him, and raise himself to God; in so much, that experience shows a man is then scarcely able to think seriously on heaven. It is, therefore, a particular goodness of our divine Redeemer, that he has been pleased to support and strengthen us by such a powerful sovereign medicine, adapted to all the pressing necessities of that critical time, as the council of Trent elegantly explains; (Sess. 7, c. 2,) adding, "That a neglect of so great a sacrament, cannot be without a grievous crime and injury of the Holy Ghost, whether in the pastor or penitent." St. Charles Borromeo relates to this purpose, (Conc. Med. 5,) the example of St. Malachy, who attributed to his own negligence the misfortune of a woman, who died without having received it, and spent the whole night in prayers and floods of tears, with which he bathed the corpse. But, in the morning, our Lord heard the saint, so that she returned again to life, as if awaking from a profound sleep, and, sitting up in her bed, received this sacrament from his hands, and afterwards recovered her health.

We see from the life of St. Malachy, written by St. Bernard, and from some rituals and canons, (as, cap. ab infirmis, 26. c. 7,) that, in some churches, extreme unction was given immediately after penance, of which it is the complement, and before the viaticum; which custom is now observed in the diocess of Paris: but, the foolish delays of many, not willing to receive a sacrament, which they rashly looked upon as the forerunner of death, till at the last extremity, moved the chief pastors, in most places, to order the viaticum to be given first, lest persons, so delaying, might be reduced to such a state, as to become incapable of receiving it, as Bellarmine observes, l. de arte moriendi, c. 7.

They are guilty of a mortal sin, who defer this sacrament so as to run the risk of losing it; (e. g.) foolishly persuading themselves, that it is a sign of death: also, they who encourage such illusions or delays; or, who do not advertise the sick in time to receive it, especially if they be pastors or physicians; nor is the fear of alarming the patient an excuse though prudent care must be taken to prevent such a foolish alarm.

[a] Van Espen, de E. U. n, 39.

8. As to the ceremonies, with which this sacrament is administered, its matter aptly signifies its effects. Firstly, the remission of sin and the restoration of the spiritual vigour of the soul, by its healing quality. Secondly, its fortifying the soul for her last conflict, is represented by its property of a strengthener of the limbs, and making them supple; for which reason, the ancient wrestlers were anointed before combat. Unction is used in baptism and confirmation, to admonish us, that we are then enlisted soldiers, to fight the battles of the Lord. It is employed here again, to put us in mind, that, as we began, so we must consummate our career, by fighting manfully and persevering to the end. This is called the last, or extreme unction, because used in three other sacraments prior to this, viz. baptism, confirmation, and order; and likewise, because it is commonly the last administered of the sacraments; whence, the Greeks place it the last in order.

The sign of the cross, represents the source, whence this holy sacrament draws all its virtue; in the same manner as it does, and is therefore used, in the celebration and administration of every other sacrament. It is likewise employed to be a terror to the infernal fiend, who is put to flight at the sight of that glorious instrument, by which he was vanquished, and man rescued out of his devouring jaws. At what time we stand more in need of being armed with this holy sign Thau, as the mark of our salvation, and the standard of our God, than in our last dreadful passage, when the devils are surrounding us, and the gates of eternity are, as it were, opened before our eyes to receive us?

The rest of these ceremonies consist in prayers. Extreme unction is administered with more prayers than the other sacraments. Its effect is owing to prayer, which constitutes the sacrament, together with the unction or matter, which it accompanies. Likewise, longer prayers make up the preparation. Among the Greeks, seven priests join in prayer in administering it. The bye-standers, also, add their private devotions for the sick man; the reason of this is, the present necessities of his soul, and his weakness to pray in a manner proportioned to them; therefore, the church, by her ministers, and all the faithful, come in to his assistance.

9. The penitent will receive a larger share of graces, by this sacrament, in proportion to the greater devotion and more perfect dispositions, with which he prepares himself for it. Though extreme unction should be administered immediately after the viaticum, yet some short distinct preparation is required, as it is a distinct sacrament. Besides acts of faith, hope, love of God and our neighbour, in particular, of pardon of all who have injured us, and begging pardon of all we may have injured or offended, with a sincere desire of making all due satisfaction; this preparation consists in the most perfect acts and prayers of repentance, as this sacrament is a supplement to that of penance, and is therefore, ranked by Origin, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustin, &c. amongst the proper means of penance and pardon of sin, which Christ has left to his church. It is the last perfect purifier of the soul, but this it performs only in proportion to the sincerity of her compunction. Hence, the prayers, with which the church administers it, are in the penitential spirit, to beg pardon of the patient's sins, and to deliver him from his spiritual infirmities, wounds, and sorrows, of which each of these prayers speaks. The litanies are added, to engage the blessed in heaven, who make but one elect body with us, to assist us with their suffrages, that assisted by the church triumphant,

we may resist the powers of hell. The latter part of the litanies consists of the three sorts of petition, mentioned by St. Paul, (1 Tim. ii. 1, deprecations,) to be delivered from all evil; intreaties, conjuring God to show mercy, by his cross and other mysteries; and prayers or petitions that he may spare us. As the remission of sin, the victory over death, and all the fruit of the sacraments, is from the virtue of Christ's death and passion, it is through it, in a particular manner, that these prayers are to be presented to God. The penitent may then prepare himself for this sacrament, by answering in his heart to these litanies and other prayers, which the priest recites, not as private devotions, but as public, in the name of the church, and, consequently, with greater efficacy; or he must, in the mean time, draw ejaculations of compunction from Christ's sufferings, from the penitential psalms, or the like; and, remembering that Christ, in his agony, would be visited and comforted by an angel, let him earnestly beg, that he himself visit, comfort, and strengthen him.

10. Whilst he is receiving the sacrament, as every sense is anointed that each instrument of sin may be cleansed, and each organ, which had been depraved by sin, may be reformed and sanctified, the penitent ought, in the most fervent compunction of his soul, to beg, by the wounds and blood of Jesus, that all his sins committed by every sense and faculty, in commission or omission, be entirely blotted out, offering up the sufferings and merits of Christ in satisfaction for them, and praying that all his senses and powers be consecrated pure to God alone for evermore, as in this form, at the eyes: "Sweet Jesus, by thy most tender mercy, and by thy sacred wounds and blood, pardon me all the innumerable sins I have ever committed by my sight. I most heartily detest and bewail them; consecrate my eyes henceforth entirely to thyself." And so of the other senses.

11. After receiving extreme unction, let the penitent cry out from his heart: Praised for ever be thy holy name, O God, for this and all thy unspeakable mercies. Grant to my soul the full effects of this holy sacrament; its abundant graces; true patience to support all inward trouble or exterior pains under sickness; strength to resist all temptations; an entire pardon of all my offences, and courage and final perseverance in thy love. If my health be expedient for thy glory, let this be the means to restore it; if it be for my spiritual good, and thy divine honour, that I now pay the tribute of nature, I cheerfully submit myself to thy holy ordinance; but earnestly beg, that thou call me hence in mercy, and unite me to thyself. O sweetest Jesus, by thy precious death, forsake me not in this time of my distress, but defend me from evil, and now prepare my soul for thyself, and admit me into the number of thy blessed.

DISCOURSE LXVII.

ON THE VIRTUES AND TEMPTATIONS UNDER THE LAST SICKNESS.

1. UNDER sickness, especially if it be dangerous, a person ought to have so settled his temporal concerns, as to be under no necessity of giving his thoughts or precious time to them; but to employ them on spiritual things by short prayers, which he may often repeat in his heart, or get suggested

to him by others, yet without importunity or tediousness, or so as to fatigue his head or spirits; which will require not only great intervals of rest, but likewise some grave relaxation; such, however, as may not distract his mind from God. To help his attention, it is good to have a crucifix, or picture of our Saviour in his agony or on the cross, or of the penitent Magdalen, so placed that he may cast his eyes upon it. This means will help him often to excite himself to God by short aspirations with greater ease in his weak condition, in which he is perhaps, scarcely able to think without some such assistance. Acts of the three theological virtues, of patience, resignation, sacrifice, and penance, must be his principal entertainment. To facilitate the exercise of them to him, another may sometimes propose them to him as short as possible; to which he may answer Amen, at least in his heart; or repeat them to himself, by only pronouncing the holy name Jesus to himself, in his heart with compunction, love, confidence, and resignation.

These acts may be formed by way of petition; e. g. Teach me, O God, to believe in thee one God in three co-eternal persons: in Christ, my Redeemer, the second person of this adorable Trinity; and in all thy truths, because thou, O eternal truth, hast revealed them. Teach me to hope in thee, whose infinite power and goodness cannot forsake one who trusts in thee. Teach me to love thee with my whole heart, O sovereign goodness; to detest and grieve for all my sins, because by them I offended thee; to forgive all who have injured me, as I beg thou wilt forgive me my grievous treasons against thee; and to love all for thy sake; to offer thee my heart as an entire sacrifice in life and in death, to do thy holy will in all things.

2. Acts of prayer may be formed thus:

O God of pity and mercy, look down on my weakness and miseries, and be moved to compassion. The sight of miserable objects, whilst on earth, moved thy bowels of tenderness. Let now the sight of my poverty, weakness, sufferings, and incapacity to do anything for myself awaken thy paternal goodness over me.

All friends on earth are unable to relieve or comfort me; the world forsakes me in my distress. Thou alone art my true and only friend, O my God and my all; to thee I fly with my whole heart. Cast me not from thee.

Loving Redeemer, when it was told thee: "Behold! Lazarus, whom thou lovest, is sick;" thy tenderness was moved, and thou would immediately go to visit him. Thou lovest me, O Father of souls: for I am thy work, stamped with thy image and written in thy hand. Behold then in me, though so base a wretch, him whom thou lovest now sick; make haste to visit me.

I groan under the weight of my manifold temporal and spiritual miseries; but thy presence would heal them all. Visit me, O God, my powerful deliverer.

3. Acts of faith must be explicit on the Trinity and Incarnation at least, and may be made by reciting the Apostles' Creed, or thus: I firmly believe one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that God the Son was made man, and died on an ignominious cross. I believe all that this God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has taught me by his holy Catholic church, which he instructs and guides in all truth, by his unerring spirit, to the end of the world. I am resolved, by his grace,

to live and die in this faith, and an obedient child of this his holy church. His word can never deceive me.

These acts may be made by way of prayer, petition, or oblation; as thus: I commend myself to thee, O holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who, three persons in the same undivided divine nature, art only one true God. I commend myself to thee, O almighty Father, who createdst me, the heavens, the earth, and all things visible and invisible out of nothing. I commend myself to thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, who for men and for our salvation wouldst vouchsafe to be made man, to be born of the ever Virgin Mary, ever remaining a pure virgin, to suffer, die on an ignominious cross, rise again and ascend into heaven, whence thou wilt come at the last day to judge all men, who wilt raise them from the dust, the just to eternal bliss, the wicked to eternal torments. I commend myself to thee, O Holy Ghost, who proceedest from the Father and the Son. I adore and glorify you, one God. I promise obedience to thy holy church, established by thee to the end of the world, and the depository of thy holy truth and sacraments.

This act may be made by way of oblation, as, "I offer myself to thee, O Holy Trinity, Father," &c.

Or, of thanksgiving, as, "I thank and praise, O Holy Trinity, Father," &c.

Sometimes in a short manner: "O Lord, I believe; aid the weakness of my faith."

4. Acts of hope may be excited in the following manner: My sins provoke thy justice, O God; but thy goodness still desires to save me. Thou lovest me as a workman loves the work of his hands, or a father his son, whose good and happiness he desires more than the son himself can do. I cannot desire my own salvation so earnestly as thou dost. It was for this that thou createdst me out of nothing; for this thy only co-eternal Son died on a cross to redeem me; for this thou hast enriched me with so many graces, and has established so many means of grace and mercy to conduct me to thy glory.

Acts of hope may be suggested from the passion of Christ, and from ejaculations drawn from holy Scripture.

Father, who to redeem thy slave, deliveredst up thy Son, have mercy on me.

"In thee, O Lord, have I hoped; I shall not be confounded for ever."

"Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou disturb me? Hope in God, because still will I confess to him, the salvation of my countenance and my God." Ps. xlii.

Thou, O Lord, hast said: "I am the resurrection and the life, and he who believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live; and he who liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." John xii.

"I considered the Lord as always present; because he is at my right hand, lest I be moved." Ps. xv.

"I am thine: O save me."

"Mercy shall surround him, who hopeth in the Lord."

Thou, O Lord, art my hope, whatever is to be done or suffered.

5. Penance and contrition is to be the most familiar exercise of all persons under sickness, entirely to wipe away all obstacles to God's favour and mercy. To excite this holy compunction, short reflections may be suggested on the infinite majesty of God, his hatred of sin in the angels,

&c., his goodness, benefits, and love; especially the passion of Christ; the evils of sin, &c., as by saying: How could I offend and insult my loving great God, my heavenly Father, before whom the angels tremble; him who created me to his own image, &c.; him who loved me from eternity with an infinite love, and delivered his only Son for me to a most cruel and ignominious death, &c.

By your precious blood wash away all my stains and sins; by it supply the imperfections of my actions. Turn thy face, O God, from my sins, and look upon the face of thy Son. Accept his sacrifice for the cancelling of all my debts and offences.

You left your ninety-nine sheep to seek the one, that was astray. Behold I am thy lost sheep. Take me upon thy shoulders, and restore me to thy pasture.

I am that unfortunate man, left wounded and destitute on the high way from Jericho to Jerusalem. Heal my wounds, O pious Samaritan, O only physician of my poor soul.

Heaven rejoiced, and you made a festival of triumph on the return of your prodigal son. I am that ungrateful wretch; O blessed Father, receive me again into that household, bathed in tears at the sight of thy goodness and my misery.

"Enter not into judgment with thy servant, because no living creature shall be justified in thy sight." Ps. cxlii. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of thy mercies, blot out my iniquities. Still wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." Ps. l.

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am not now worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hirelings." Luke xv. 19.

My debts are immense. I am affrighted at the sight and consideration of thy justice. But how can I despair? My Jesus has paid for them an infinite price. "The tribulations of my heart are multiplied; extricate me from my necessities." I renounce thee, Satan; and adhere to thee, O Christ.

Care must be taken that perfect restitution be made for all the injustices, detractions, &c., and satisfaction and reparation for all injuries done to others.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. For thy sake, O God, do I, from my heart, perfectly forgive all. Arise according to thy word, and forgive my immense debt to thee.

St. Augustin, in his last sickness, caused select verses out of the penitential Psalms to be written and hung all around his bed, more easily to excite his attention in that weak state, saying that no one, even the most innocent, ought to die without penance. It was long the custom of religious and devout persons to receive the last sacraments, and to die, laid on hair-cloth and ashes strewed on the floor, as an emblem of the penance, in which they died, as St. Charles observes, in his ritual of Milan. St. Martin, after a most innocent and holy life, would die so, saying: "It behoveth a christian to die in sackcloth and ashes; and I sin, if I leave you a different example." The holy monks of La Trappe, kiss the hair-cloth and ashes in a spirit of compunction, when they are laid on it.

6. As to acts of the holy love of God, let them be most frequent. Affections and aspirations are to be formed, from his infinite goodness and

perfections; from his eternal infinite love for us; his benefits of nature in creating, preserving, protecting us, commanding his angels to guard us, &c. of grace, and our redemption, and sanctification; and of the glory, which he has prepared for us.

Give me, O God, thy holy love above all things, and with my whole heart. I ask nothing else. In this I have all things. Who will give me, that I may love thee as I ought? When wilt thou fill my whole heart? When shall I be all thine? Oh! make me so this moment, my God. I rejoice in thy infinite happiness and perfections, O God. Every thing is vile to me, who have found thee. Grant that I may find thee, and trample on every thing but thee.

"Hallowed be thy name, thy will be done in heaven and on earth."

"My God, and my all. What have I in the heavens, and besides thee what have I wished on earth! Thou art the God of my heart, and my inheritance for ever. O God, my God, from the rising sun do I watch thee. As the hart panteth, &c. Who will deliver me from this body of death? Lead out my soul from prison, to confess with thy angels unto thy name."

Who will grant, that my soul, created by thee, may return to its origin? Good Jesus, when shall I appear before thee? Oh! when shall I be with thee, in thy kingdom Oh! that I had lived and breathed with your holy love alone; O God, grant, that my life's last breath may be consumed in your love.

7. Acts of resignation, and against the fear of death, must not be omitted. It is a dangerous flattery in friends, to give a sick man too great hopes of life; yet, he must be sweetly prepared to submit to death, and resign himself to it in a spirit of sacrifice. In short, and without dwelling long on this subject, this disposition will be worked up in him, by proposing mildly and tenderly the indispensable necessity of death in all; the miseries and dangers of this life; the glory of heaven, and the expectation of the blessed waiting for us; that death is but the passage to bliss; that God is our good and loving Father, desiring our salvation, knowing best the time, &c. to call us hence. One true act of his love, and of contrition, will remove all that we can fear in death, viz. sin.

"I have rejoiced in the things, which have been said unto me; we will go into the house of the Lord." Ps. cxxi.

If he pray for health, let him always add from his heart: "However, let not my will, but thine be done. As is the will of heaven, so let it be done. Yes, Father, because such is thy pleasure. Christ is my life, and death a gain. I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ."

Whether I live or die, O Lord, may I live and die only to thee. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and on the last day I shall arise from the earth, and shall again be clothed with my flesh, and in it I shall see God, whom I myself am to see and no other." Job xix.

I thank you, with all the affections of my soul, my God, that you did not call me out of this world in my sins. Grant me now true penance. I offer thy Christ for the expiation and propitiation of my offences. I accept death in satisfaction and in obedience to thy holy sweet ordinance.

"When shall I come and appear before the face of God? Lord, I have loved the beauty of thy house, and the place of residence of thy glory. One thing I have asked of thee, this I will require; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Under violent pains: "Here burn, here cut, nor spare me here, that thou mayest eternally spare me; however, I beg that thy mercy may temper thy justice."[a]

8. The sign of the cross, or the presence of a crucifix, excites devotion to the sacred passion of Christ, and is a terror to the devil, and a sign of confidence to the soul; "In this sign thou shalt conquer." The sick man ought to excite himself to all virtues, principally by entertaining himself on Christ crucified; to faith, adoration, and love, saying: "I believe that thou art the son of the living God, who camest into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the greatest; save me. We adore thee, we bless thee, Christ. Seeking me, thou didst sit down tired. Thou hast redeemed me by thy cross, let not such sufferings prove vain. Just avenging Judge, pardon our sins, before the great avenging day."

"Behold the wood of the cross, the ensign of the great king; flee ye infernal powers, the lion of the tribe of Juda has conquered."[b] Remember, O Jesus, what I cost thee; remember thy bloody agony, &c. let not thy pains, tears, and blood be lost for me.

The patient may often adore each wound apart, and beg by each patience, pardon, and mercy; as, by his sacred head, pierced with thorns; by his adorable hands, bored with nails, &c. begging to be bathed in his precious blood, and to be sheltered in his wounds from dangers and enemies. Looking on the crucifix, let him say: O Christ, thou wert lifted up on the cross, as the serpent in the desert, that all looking on you might be healed. Heal me, O blessed Redeemer. You were hung on the cross to draw all to you. Draw my heart to yourself by sweet love.

How didst thou, in thy infinite mercy, labour, weep, pray, and suffer for me? thy head was crowned with thorns for me; thy side was opened, thy arms stretched on a cross to receive me. To thee I fly, my only refuge.

O Jesus, by thy bitter agony and pains, by thy sacred death, have mercy on me. Holy eyes, once shut by death for me, look on me. Sacred hands, bless and defend me. Adorable side, laid open for me, receive me. Divine arms, stretched out by love, admit me to thy embraces. Precious blood, wash me; holy wounds, be so many mouths calling for mercy on me. Enter not into judgment with me, merciful Redeemer. My sins overwhelm me with confusion and dread; but, as you pardoned the penitent thief on the cross, so pardon me. One drop of thy precious blood is sufficient to wash away the sins of ten thousand worlds. May it efface my grievous offences. I commend myself to you, who have the keys of life and death. I cost you too dear; reject me not.

My sins, O God, are so grievous, that no creature can satisfy for them or even comprehend their malice; but thy only Son, Jesus, pleads for my pardon on his cross; he interposes his sufferings between them and thy justice. Behold his gaping wounds, behold the anguish of his heart for me, and for his sake, show me mercy and pardon.

"Remember, O merciful Jesus, that I am the cause of thy sufferings: suffer me not to be lost on that day."[c]

[a] Hic ure, hic seca, hic non parcas, modo in æternum parcas. Verumtamen justitiam tuam paterna misericordia temperet, rogo.

[b] Ecce signum crucis, signum magni regis; fugite partes adversæ: vicit Leo de tribu Juda.

[c] Recordare, Jesu pie, quod sim causa tuæ viæ. Ne me perdas illa die.

9. Especially in his agony, or under violent pains, let him often repeat: Sweetest Jesus, remember the anguish of thy divine heart in the garden, when thou receivedst comfort from an angel, and on the cross, when thou criedst out: Why hast thou forsaken me? Thou sufferedst all this for me, Thou, under that bitter agony, prayedst with a loud voice and tears for me, and thou wast heard for thy reverence. Suffer me not to deprive myself of the effect of this mercy. Say to me as thou didst to the good thief: This day shalt thou be with me in paradise. In union with thy commendation of thy spirit into the hands of thy eternal Father, grant me to say truly: Into thy hands I commend my spirit: Lord Jesus, receive my soul. Angels and saints condescend to meet me; present me before the throne of God. Now, whilst time is, intercede for me, and procure me perfect repentance and love.

My soul, look up to heaven, where God reigns with his saints in glory. There is no more sorrow or pain; no more anxiety or danger; but all joy, peace, and security; the angels, the patriarchs, the apostles, and martyrs, inebriated with the plenty of God's house, expect me to be united within their happy troop. Come, Jesus, come; receive me into thy eternal tabernacles.

The soul must not forget to implore earnestly the intercession of the Mother of God, her angel guardian, patrons, and all the angels and saints. "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and in the hour of our death. O refuge of sinners and comforter of the afflicted, pray for me." And all you saints, now secure of yourselves, be yet solicitous for me. "Holy angels, our guardians, defend us in the battle, that we perish not in the awful judgment."

With her last breath, let her repeat: "I believe, I hope, I love. How sorry am I to have sinned!" and never cease repeating, at least in her heart, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Remember, O Redeemer, your anguish and agony in the garden, and on the cross; unite mine to your sacred agony and death, sanctify and strengthen me by yours; receive my soul, as you commended yourself into the hands of your heavenly Father.

10. Persons in their last moments are often exposed to temptations. The devil, using his utmost efforts to ruin them, "cometh down, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." Apoc. xii. 12. If the sick person be assaulted with impatience under pains, or at the sight of death, let his principal entertainment be on the passion of Christ, begging by it holy patience and entire resignation. The remembrance of it is a wonderful charm to allay any pains or grief; and Jesus is always sensibly present with those, who suffer with him.

He must draw aspirations of patience and resignation also from the reflections, that impatience is unprofitable, increases sufferings, destroys their merit, and offends God; that God, the most tender Father, and most skilful physician, sends all for his good; that sufferings wash away the rust of sin, and appease the divine justice, and, though severe, are still far lighter than the sufferings of the world to come. See the acts of patience and resignation above.

Against an inordinate love of life and fear of death let him excite his affections from the necessity of dying; the evils and dangers of life: the goodness of God and the motives for submitting joyfully to his will; his paternal providence over wife, children, &c. his readiness to forgive all sin in a moment in case of true repentance, which a longer life would not render

more certain. Let him then commend and leave all his concerns to God, accept his will with joy, beg the pardon of his sins with confidence in God's mercy, and in humility, offering up his death, in union with Christ's, as a sacrifice of expiation.

Under violent pains, let him repeat: "Jesus, mercy! Remove from me thy stripes. I will fear no evils, because thou art with me."

11. If he be molested with importunate temptations against faith, he must be sure never to reason or dispute with them; but quietly and firmly to oppose the enemy by an act of faith, in believing all that God has revealed and his church teaches; resting in the testimony of God sealed with the undoubted marks of his word, and with the blood of innumerable martyrs.

If he be assaulted with despair, it must be examined well, whether some secret impenitence, refusal of restitution, or the like, be the cause; and this must be removed. Then diffidence and pusillanimity must be expelled by aspirations of confidence from the mercies and love of God, his promises of pardon, the passion of Christ, and the examples of the great sinners raised to be eminent saints; so far does God forget the past after true repentance. If scruples disturb him, he must bring himself to humble submission and obedience with a holy confidence.

If his danger consist in presumption and a spiritual insensibility, he must awaken himself, by acts of contrition, at the sight of his sins, and of a fear of God's judgments. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, because no living creature shall be justified. If the just man shall with difficulty be saved, what shall become of the wicked sinner? From my hidden sins," &c.

The stars are not pure in thy sight; how shall I appear before thee? The saints tremble: what must I do? "Who knows if God will turn to us, and give us a blessing?" Joel ii.

If sloth be his malady, let him spur himself on by frequent and earnest ejaculations of fear and compunction.

12. A criminal under sentence of death must be encouraged to resignation by considering that it is a great mercy and benefit of God, affording him an easy means of expiating his offences, and repairing scandal; the most happy kind of death, not sudden and unforeseen; less painful than generally in violent sickness; also giving an opportunity of the best preparation and of greater merit by submitting to it with patience and resignation. He must meditate on the example of Christ and the bitterness of his death, without dwelling on the circumstances of his own. Neither let him take too formal leave of his friends, nor even see those, whose company might excite indecent grief. His preparation for death may be gathered from above; let his time be taken up in exercises of repentance and divine love. At the execution he would be his own self-murderer, if he did anything, which might directly hasten his death, as by fitting the rope, &c. but he is obliged to obey the proper officers in those things, which only remotely lead him to death, as by going, when ordered, to the place of execution. He must be careful to injure no one's reputation, to repair scandals given, and sincerely to forgive and love all persons.

13. When any person is dying, let a crucifix be left near him, and often presented to him; also holy water, which by the prayers of the church contains a blessing against evil spirits, and has been the instrument of many miracles, as we read in the lives of several saints. Let every thing be removed out of the room, which might excite human affections, or

hinder the preparation of his soul. On this account, let not wife, children, or other persons, whose sight might disturb his mind, be too freely allowed to approach him. Let him be often recommended to the prayers of the faithful and of the church, and assisted by alms and other such spiritual helps

As the last moments of a man's life are the most precious, and of infinite importance, inasmuch as his eternity depends on them, let all who are his friends, show themselves in those moments to be truly friends, and employ themselves by fervent prayer, and sometimes by his side, to procure for him God's powerful graces. A few prayers before death will be much more beneficial to him than many after death. By procuring for him the grace of perfect contrition, they may preserve him from hell, or even from purgatory, and prepare him for higher glory. Let them also show their charity by suggesting to him proper ejaculations to help him in forming suitable acts of virtue. If he be able to bear it without fatiguing his head, they may recite longer prayers near him, as the penitential psalms, litanies, prayers on the passion of our Saviour, such as those called St. Bridget's, or those of Gother for the approaches of death, (p. 209,) the Pater and Ave, leisurely, with pauses during his agony, or before it, when he seems in immediate danger; they ought to repeat by his side the prayers of the church for the recommendation of the soul; if in Latin, which he may not understand, they should be often interrupted to entertain his devotion by suggesting certain pious aspirations. A blessed candle is put into his hand, in his agony, or placed lighted by him as an emblem of the light of faith in which he dies, and of the light of glory to which he is passing.

14. The parish church-yard is the proper burying place of christians, being blessed by a special benediction for that purpose. The ancient heathens every where forbad severely all burials within cities; doubtless that the infection might not corrupt the air, as is lately made manifest by fatal experience that it does. The christians, when peace was restored to the church, buried the martyrs in the churches for honour's sake. Others desiring to be laid near their reliques, church-yards were placed in towns to serve as the common burying-places of christians. Hence, St. Chrysostom writes (Hom. 26, in 1 Cor.) "That emperors esteemed it an honour that they might be buried near the porches of the apostles, and kings to be made porters of fishermen." Many canons forbid any to be interred in churches, an honour reserved only to the bodies of saints and martyrs." See l. 1, Capital. cap. 158, & l. 2, c. 18, and Can. 15, causa 13, qu. 2. Near great churches were built cloisters or large porticos for more honourable burying places for persons of distinction, as we still see in the Campo Santo at Pisa, in the great portico at the cathedral of Vienna in Dauphiny, and in many other places. In the ninth century persons of eminent sanctity were, by the bishop's concession, interred within the churches, which custom continued to extend until it became a grievous abuse. Of this several councils have complained; such as that of Rouen, A.D. 1581, of Rheims, A.D. 1583. &c. It is now become general by prescription in some countries. Nevertheless it is still more conformable to the spirit of the church, as well as to the ancient canons, that christians should be buried in the church-yard, than in the church; and some divines affirm this to be more beneficial to their souls; for only the church-yard, not the church, is blessed for this end, of which no mention is made in the consecration of a church. In the missals we also find prayers for the

dead in the parish, expressing only all, who are buried in the church-yard, and not directed for any in the church. Therefore, though burials are free, yet, when the choice can be made, this seems the more advisable.

15. It is very repugnant to the humility and simplicity of religion, that funerals should be made a subject of pride, pomp, and extravagance; and mourning converted into a ridiculous, ill-placed ostentation. A true christian will rather apply such expenses to the relief of the poor than to the gratification of such idle vanity. A decency indeed must be observed; but even this is rather a comfort of the living than of any advantage to the deceased, as St. Augustin observes, l. de cur. pro mort. It is however a duty of respect, which we owe to the memory of friends, and an act of charity, thus to bury the dead according to the rules of simplicity adapted to such a ceremony. But our chief care ought to be to procure the suffrages of the church, and the prayers of the poor, for their or our own spiritual relief.

16. It is a supine and criminal neglect to defer making our preparation for death to the last, which ought to be the study of our whole lives. The emperor Charles V. having renounced his worldly crown and concerns, to employ his last years in retirement in a monastery, had all the ceremonies of his obsequies performed before his own eyes, and assisted at them to put himself into more lively dispositions for a happy death. Several devout christians make a retreat of three days in the month or three or seven days in the year for this purpose. On the first day (e. g.) they meditate on the certainty and uncertainty of death; on the second, on a good and bad death, and in imagination take leave of friends, and all this world, as if now in their last sickness and at the point of death. In the mean time they prepare for confession as if to be the last in their lives, which they make on the third day; on the fourth prepare for communion as if for their viaticum; and receive it on the fifth; then enter into the preparation and dispositions for extreme unction; on the sixth perform the last devotions as if in their agony. All this while they exercise their souls in acts of faith, hope, and especially of resignation, divine charity, sacrifice of themselves, and the most perfect repentance. The last day they employ to obtain the grace of a happy death, and always to live with their house in order, and in a readiness for it; and endeavour to inflame themselves with a desire of praising God perfectly in heaven to supply all their defects with regard to this point on earth. They take care to beg his grace in all their devout prayers, and to implore the intercession of the blessed Virgin and all the saints.

FINIS.

FROM THE STEAM PRESS OF ALEXANDER THOM, 86, ABBEY-STREET, DUBLIN.

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